هكذا زمن الإمل

Al-Ahram Weekly

No354 الاهرام ويكلي

Published in Cairo by AL-AHRAM established in 1875

4 - 10 December 1997 16 Pages P.T.75

Garang, portrait of the week by Bahgory 8

photo: Sherif Sonbol



THE EXHIBITION of Omar El-Nagdi's *The Last Supper in Jerusalem*, alongside other works by the artist in the foyer of Al-Ahram's main building on Galaa Street, coincides with the 50th anniversary of the partition of Palestine. The triptych, writes Ibrahim Nafie in the forward to the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, expresses horror "at tyranny, indifference to the plight of one's fellows and the monstrous disregard of human rights"

Hawking a new map

A second redeployment should be good news for the Palestinians. But not, writes **Graham Usher**, when the plans are drawn up by a hawk in dove's clothing

Last Sunday — and nearly three months overdue — the Israeli cabinet agreed "in principle" to implement a second military redeployment in the West Bank. If the Palestinian leadership was swift to dismiss the proposal, this was less because of the vagaries of the offer than because of the Likud vision of a final settlement that underlies it.

Nevertheless, the AP reported yesterday that US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Paris on Friday and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Geneva on Saturday to try to broker an agreement on implementation of the Israeli proposal.

Despite Binyamin Netanyahu's claim that the decision marks "a historic opportunity to advance the peace", the offer makes no mention of either the size of the redeployment or when the transfer to Palestinian control would occur. These are conditional on the Palestinian Authority (PA) fulfilling its "responsibilities" as set down in the January 1997 Hebron agreement, primarily to complete the "revising" of the Palestinian Charter, combat "terror and prevent violence" in the self-rule areas and cease all "governmental activity" in East Jerusalem.

But there is also a new condition, expressed in the cabinet communiqué issued after the meeting. Prior to the redeployment being carried out, the cabinet will undertake "a thorough discussion to... formulate its plans for the final status negotiations", which Netanyahu wants to commence once the second redeployment is completed.

The "plans" are to determine those parts of the Occupied Territories Israel will seek to keep in any final settlement with the Palestinians. These are "security zones vital to the state of Israel, settlement areas and other vital interests, including water and historical Jewish sites". Once a cabinet consensus on these areas is reached, Israel will decide the scale and pace of the redeployment and then make its offer to the PA.

The new condition bears the signature of National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, who, together with Netanyahu, Foreign Minister David Levy and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, will form a ministerial committee to draw up Israel's "map of interests" for the cabinet's approval. And it is because of Sharon's involvement that Israel's offer should be seen not only as a diversionary tactic but also as a real strategy which, if left unchecked, could fix once and for all the parameters of the final status negotiations.

Sharon's emergence as an apparent advocate of reaching a final settlement with the Palestinians has left many observers scratching their heads. One the one hand, Israel's foremost hawk appears to be sprouting the plumage of a dove, telling his settler constituencies that under Oslo Israel has to carry out a second redeployment and accepting gloomily that "a Palestinian state is coming into existence" in the West Bank whether Israel likes it or not. But this dove has claws, as Sharon's scenario for Palestinian statehood makes clear.

According to a classified Foreign Ministry summary leaked to the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot* on 25 November, Sharon has been urging the Americans to accept a final arrangement with the Palestinians in which Israel would annex a 7-10 kilometre seam east of the Green Line and a 20km seam west of the Jordan River, including the whole of the Jordan Valley. Sharon also wants Israel to control all crossing points into the Palestinian "state", including the Gaza airport and harbour and establish at least 13 by-pass roads in the West Bank to service Jewish settlements, all of which would stay "intact". Greater Jerusalem and the West Bank's water resources — needless to say — would remain under exclusive Israeli sovereignty.

The plan would be risible were it not for the fact that the Israeli cabinet has just approved a further redeployment that "in principle" expresses it. Thus the cabinet offer makes no mention of a third redeployment, which, under the Hebron agreement, Israel is obliged to carry out by "mid-1998" and which Palestinians see as essential if they are to unite their desegregated cantons into a contiguous territory ahead of any final negotiations on borders. Nor does the offer make any reference to the other interim issues such as the Gaza airport and harbour and a "safe passage" between Gaza and the West Bank, unsurprisingly given Sharon's insistence that such exits should be under Israeli control.

There is little doubt that Sharon's vision is shared by Netanyahu. Asked what he would do should Yasser Arafat decide that Oslo is over and declare unilaterally a Palestinian state, Netanyahu was quoted in the Israeli daily *Maariv* on Tuesday as saying, "If they [the Palestinians] declare an independent state, I will *immediately* annex the Jordan Valley to *Israel*, and additional territories. Perhaps the entire territory".

Arafat is unlikely to make any such declaration. His aim rather is to prevent the second redeployment gaining international currency by ensuring that no other party accepts it.

On the day of the cabinet decision, Arafat dispatched Palestinian negotiator, Nabil Shaath, to Cairo to sound out Egyptian reactions to Israel's offer. The next day Egypt's Foreign Minister, Amr Moussa, said the cabinet decision did not meet "Palestinian aspirations". At a meeting with Jordan's prime minister, Abdel-Salam Majali, on Tuesday, Arafat urged King Hussein to support all parts of the Hebron agreement, especially the "three redeployments".

The Palestinian leader will also have been pleased with the response of Israel's Labour-led opposition. In an unusually harsh denunciation, Labour leader, Ehud Barak, described the cabinet decision as "totally irrelevant" and said it had "nothing to do with the peace process". He also instructed his MPs to support a no-confidence motion in the government, which failed narrowly, by 45 votes to 50.

But the critical response is that of the Americans, who, true to form, have been deeply ambiguous. Welcoming the cabinet decision as "a step in the right direction", State Department spokesman James Rubin would not be drawn on whether the redeployment met the criteria of "significance and credibility" that Madeleine Albright had demanded when she met Netanyahu in London last month. "We're going have to look at the details and see how far it goes," was all Rubin would say.

What is less ambiguous is the cabinet's attitude to settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza. So far from calling for a freeze or "time out" on settlement building, the communiqué calls on the Israeli government to "take the necessary steps for the continued existence and strengthening of West Bank settlements". Sharon had reportedly wanted the wording to be "acceleration". But this is semantics. One day after the cabinet vote, the Israeli press reported that the government had approved the construction of 900 houses at the Alfei Menashe settlement in the West Bank and 26 houses at the tiny Nisanit settlement in Gaza.

Egypt-Qatar rapprochement

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, arrived in Riyadh yesterday for reconciliation talks sponsored by Saudi Arabia.

Before his departure from Doha, Sheikh Hamad said he would meet in Riyadh with President Mubarak and King Fahd "to correct the misunderstanding and express our regret for what happened between the two brotherly countries. We are doing this in line with our Arab values and ethics which bring together the [Arab] brothers."

(see p.2)

Food barriers

IRAQ stepped up pressure on the UN Security Council by threatening to suspend oil exports under the "oil for food" accord by the end of the week unless a distribution plan of humanitarian shipments formulated by the UN secretary-general was approved.

Baghdad accused the US and Britain of obstructing food and medicine contracts, claiming that 80 contracts from the first phase of the accord, which ended in June, have yet to be approved by the UN sanctions committee.

Sorely missed

IT IS with great sadness that *Al-Ahram Weekly* announces the death of Stephen Nimr, who died peacefully in the early hours of the morning of 1 December after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Stephen's work at the *Weekly*, both as a translator and supervising the sports pages, combined both family traditions — his grandfather, Faris Pasha Nimr, founded the magazine *Al-Mouqtaf* and the daily newspaper *Al-Muqattam* in the 1880s following his flight from Lebanon to Egypt after receiving a death sentence for political activities — and personal interests — he had himself qualified for Wimbledon in the 1940s, and continued to play a mean game of golf until the debilitating effects of illness kept him from the greens.

Stephen Nimr will be sorely missed by his colleagues. His unremitting courtesy, impeccable manners and instinctive sense of savoir faire are all too seldom encountered. Perhaps such qualities have always been uncommon. And with the death of Stephen Nimr, a gentleman in the truest sense of the word, they become even rarer.

Nation rallies against terrorism

As opposition parties rallied behind the government in the battle against terrorism, Prime Minister Ganzouri ruled out any dialogue with Islamist militants. **Shaden Shehab** reports

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, denying reports leaked by London-based militants that a dialogue was underway between the government and Islamist groups, insisted that five of the six Luxor assailants were killed by police fire. Meanwhile, opposition party leaders, who met with Ganzouri on Monday, pledged support for the government in its war against terrorism.

Ganzouri, at a meeting with editors-in-chief on Tuesday, described reports that a "semi-official" personality had begun mediation efforts between the government and the militant groups as "unfounded".

The claim was made in London by Yasser Serri, sentenced to death in absentia for his role in an abortive 1994 attempt on the life of Prime Minister Atef Sidki. Islamist figures and security sources, though, insist that Serri only represents himself. "He is only seeking media attention by circulating such reports," an Islamist source in Cairo said.

Ganzouri, denying rumours of a mass suicide, said that five of the six Luxor assailants were killed by fire from a lone police officer after the gunmen were trapped inside a mountain cave.

Initial reports following the 17 November massacre, in which 58 tourists and four Egyptians were killed, had said that the five assailants killed a sixth comrade, who was wounded by police fire, because they could not carry him as they attempted to escape.

Then they hijacked an empty tourist bus, which they abandoned when they realised that police were giving chase, and took refuge inside the cave.

What happened afterwards remains unclear. An eye-witness, who claimed that he was outside the cave along with a police officer, said that they heard shooting inside the grotto. When he and the officer went inside, they found that four of the assailants had been shot and killed and the fifth was wounded. The witness concluded that the four had either *killed themselves or killed each other*. The fifth was killed by the police officer.

But Ganzouri said that he had received a forensic report, which affirmed that the five had been killed by the police officer. Ganzouri, denying another press report, said the medical examination also proved that the six gunmen had been circumcised in their childhood.

Opposition party leaders vowed support for the government in its confrontation with the terrorists but some of them had reservations.

"Opposition parties are duty bound to stand with the government in fighting terrorism," said Ibrahim Shukri, leader of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, "but we have to repeal the emergency law because it leads to negative consequences."

The emergency laws, in force since President Anwar El-Sadat's assassination in 1981 by Jihad militants, empowers police to round up suspects and detain them for long periods without trial. The law has been one of the government's *principal weapons in its war with* the militants.

No'man Gomaa, deputy chairman of the Wafd Party, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the opposition and the government agreed on "mutual cooperation. It is our duty to do all that we can to fight terrorism." But Gomaa cautioned that terrorism was an offshoot of poverty and what he called a "political vacuum." The government should take this into consideration, he said.

Only one of the six assailants has been identified by police to date. He was named as Medhat Abdel-Rahman, who hails from the town of El-Badari in the *southern province of Assiut, was briefly* detained in 1993 and later departed to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Mona El-Nahhas, who travelled to El-Badari to meet with his parents, was told that they had not heard from him since his disappearance four years ago.

The parents said the Islamists managed to win Medhat over to their side by offering him a job, selling *fuul* and *taamiya* sandwiches for LE3 a day.

Yesterday, about 1,000 tour guides gathered outside the Hatshepsut Temple, the site of the slaughter, to mourn one of their colleagues, Adel Hammad, who was killed in the massacre.

Men and women, dressed in black, carried bouquets of white roses, carnations and gladioli. Muslim prayers were offered and a Christian mass was held at the temple for the rest of the victims.

"Message from Thebes," another funerary ceremony at the temple, is planned by the Ministry of Culture for 10 December. "It will be a symbolic gesture on the part of all Egyptians... and [a sign that] we will not give in to terrorism," Culture Minister Farouk Hosni told the *Weekly*.

The government, attempting to revive the tourism industry, which was dealt a crippling blow by the massacre, is acting to encourage domestic tourism. EgyptAir was ordered by Ganzouri to slash the fares of its domestic flights by 50 per cent.

(see p.3)

INSIDE


Ibrahim Nafie: Battling on many fronts 8


Eqbal Ahmad: Democracy, Indian style 5


Khairiya El-Bishlawi: Absence at the heart 11

Al-Ahram Weekly

Austria calls for concrete Israeli measures

During a visit to Cairo on Sunday, Austrian Chancellor Klima told Nevine Khalil that Prime Minister Netanyahu should deliver on agreements already signed with the Palestinians

Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima, making a regional tour, visited Cairo on Sunday and met with President Hosni Mubarak, as well as other high officials, to review the stalemate in Middle East peacemaking. Both Mubarak and Klima agreed that the ball was in Israel's court and that it was up to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to show his commitment to peace.

"It is important that Israel now takes concrete measures to continue the peace process, based on the Oslo, Hebron and interim agreements," Klima told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. He suggested that the world community take a firm stand by "expressing very clearly and strongly what we expect from Israel."

The Chancellor said Austria wished to improve the economic conditions of Palestinians in the self-rule areas, where unemployment has soared to 60 per cent. "High unemployment rates, especially among young people, [nurture] extremism," Klima said, adding that in cooperation with the European Union [EU], a "specific infrastructure programme for Palestine" could be drawn up.

European countries, however, expressing dissatisfaction with the role of financier, want to play a broader political role. Klima agrees that the EU should have a political role but this should be a "supportive role to be coordinated and developed" with the United States, the main peace broker in the region. "It should not be in competition, because this would make no sense."

Klima believes that coordination between the EU and the US would make Israel understand that the world community "expects concrete steps now."

The chancellor, who met earlier with Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said that launching final status negotiations must go hand-in-hand with the implementation of signed agreements. "Fast track negotiations over final status issues are only possible if they run parallel to delivery of the existing agreements," he said.



Klima with Mubarak on Sunday

In his talks with Mubarak, Klima also discussed the current tourist scare that followed the 17 November massacre in Luxor. Mubarak explained the "measures taken by the government to improve the quality of control and protection of tourists in this country," said Klima. He conceded that Austrians have become "more cautious" about travelling to Egypt, but stressed the necessity of publicising the government's new security measures.

Klima believes that a global effort should be made to combat terrorism, suggesting "an international platform fighting organised crime and criminals like terrorists."

The chancellor added, however, that signing an extradition treaty with Egypt would not necessarily serve such a cause. He said extradition requests must be considered "case by case" so as not to infringe on the right to political asylum.

"It is important to draw a distinction between the right of asylum for political refugees and criminal activities," he said, adding that "precise documentation" of criminal activities would have to be provided before his government would agree to hand over a political refugee.

Klima's talks with Egyptian officials also covered bilateral relations as well as Egypt-EU ties. Bilateral trade between Egypt and Austria averages a meagre $150 million annually; but Klima believes this volume can be increased. "For us, Egypt could be a gateway to the African markets," he said, "and for Egypt, Austria can be a gateway to the EU markets and central and east European countries."

During the visit, private sector representatives from the two countries met together to explore means of cooperation. "We could increase cooperation in infrastructure, energy and transport sectors as well as urban technologies," Klima said.

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat suit dropped

President Mubarak's two sons have agreed to drop the libel suit they had brought against a London-based Saudi newspaper which, in turn, has decided to reopen its Cairo office. Khaled Dawoud reports

An out-of-court settlement has been reached between the two sons of President Hosni Mubarak, Alaa and Gamal, and the publishers of the London-based Saudi newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*. According to Ragaie Attiya, the Mubaraks' lawyer, the deal was worked out at a meeting on Monday night that brought together the two sons with publishers Hesham and Mohamed Ali Hafez and the newspaper's chief editor, Othman Al-Omayer.

The three Saudi nationals, along with two London-based Egyptian journalists, were sentenced in absentia two months ago to one year's imprisonment by a first instance court after they were convicted of libel. Sayed Abdel-Ati, a journalist with the opposition newspaper *Al-Wafd* who used to contribute articles to *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

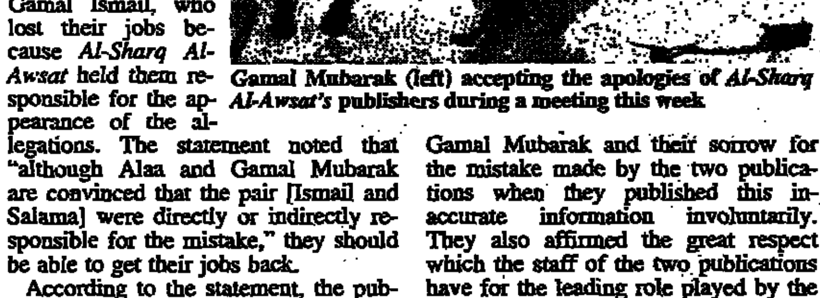
The six appealed the sentences and the first session of the appeal trial opened last month. Attiya said the out-of-court settlement had been expressly agreed upon before 10 December, the date of the second session of the appeal trial. Under the settlement, Attiya will inform the court that his clients have dropped the libel charges and that a settlement had been reached. Mubarak's sons had filed the lawsuit in May.

According to a statement released by the two sides after Monday's meeting, the publishers "offered their profound apologies for the gross mistake made by the newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* and the magazine *Al-Jadida*, after the first published an advertisement and the second an article, which did extreme and unjustifiable harm to Alaa and Gamal Mubarak, by attributing to them actions which have no basis in truth but are mere malicious and false rumours and fabrications."

The statement described the meeting between the Mubaraks and the publishers as cordial and paid tribute to the warm and close relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The newspaper also agreed to reopen its Cairo office, where more than 100 Egyptians were employed. The publishers had decided to close down the office after the sentences were handed down by the first degree court.

A day before the meeting with the publishers, Alaa and Gamal Mubarak met with the two Egyptian London-based journalists, Fawziya Salama and Gamal Ismail, who lost their jobs because *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* held them responsible for the appearance of the allegations. The statement noted that "although Alaa and Gamal Mubarak are convinced that the pair [Ismail and Salama] were directly or indirectly responsible for the mistake," they should be able to get their jobs back.



Gamal Mubarak (left) accepting the apologies of *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat's* publishers during a meeting this week

According to the statement, the publishers on behalf of the staff of *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* and *Al-Jadida* affirmed "their profound respect to Alaa and Gamal Mubarak and their sorrow for the mistake made by the two publications when they published this inaccurate information involuntarily. They also affirmed the great respect which the staff of the two publications have for the leading role played by the Arab Republic of Egypt under the wise leadership of President Hosni Mubarak."

Israeli plan leaves Cairo cold

Egypt has thrown its weight behind the Palestinians who turned down Israeli proposals that would cost them more while giving them less. Dina Ezzat reports

It has been a busy week at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with Middle East peace-making the focus of several meetings with both Israeli and Palestinian visitors. Under discussion was a proposal by the Israeli government to carry out a very limited redeployment, the scope of which is yet to be determined, in the West Bank. In return, the Palestinians would drop their demand for a larger redeployment, sanctioned by the Oslo Accords, jump-start the final status negotiations and wage a relentless war against Islamist militants.

Taking into account Egypt's role as a regional peace-broker, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu sent Eitan Ben-Tsur, general-secretary of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and his political adviser Danny Naveh, to Cairo. Ben-Tsur met with Foreign Minister Amr Moussa while Naveh held talks with presidential adviser Osama El-Baz.

Also visiting Cairo for the same purpose was Nabil Shaath, minister of planning in the Palestinian National Authority.

Judging by the statements made by Egyptian and Palestinian officials, neither side is happy with the Israeli proposal. And neither side is expecting much to come out of two Israeli committees which were authorised by the Israeli cabinet to decide the scope of the redeployment and the Palestinian obligations that should go with it.

The general impression is that the Israeli proposal will fail to make a breakthrough in the eight-month-old stalemate but may also cause additional complications. The reason is that new maps will have to be prepared for the proposed redeployment, which is bound to open the door for endless disputes between both sides.

The Israeli proposal "is too general and has too many ambiguities," said Foreign Minister Moussa following his meeting with Ben-Tsur.

But the Israeli diplomat described it as "viable" and a "way to enable [the parties] to get the [peace] process going for the final status talks."

Both Moussa and Shaath said the proposal, as it stood, fell short of meeting the Palestinian right to regain more West Bank land and to other self-rule prerogatives stipulated in the Oslo agreements.

"Talking about redeployment should mean the implementation of contractual deals and showing respect in dealing with the Palestinians, and not just giving them something so that they [the Israelis] can get out of the current crisis," said Moussa.

An earlier Israeli proposal to redeploy from between six and eight per cent of the West Bank's area was rejected by both the Palestinians and Egypt.

"According to the Oslo accords," Shaath said, "we should get 90 per cent of our land before we go to the final status talks, where we would negotiate the remaining 10 per cent, including Jerusalem and the settlements. So far, we have less than 30 per cent of this land."

Shaath said the scope of a second redeployment, under the Oslo Accords, should not be less than 24 per cent of the West Bank area and should be followed by a third withdrawal, that would bring 90 per cent of the West Bank under Palestinian self-rule. He also noted that other Israeli commitments under the interim accords, such as the opening of an airport and a harbour in Gaza, remain unfulfilled.

Now that the Palestinians have turned down the Israeli proposal, Egypt is expected to urge the United States to ask Netanyahu to modify its terms to make it as compatible as possible with the provisions of Oslo. Washington had already put pressure on the Israeli prime minister to come up with the proposal.

In the meantime, Egypt and France are considering a joint initiative that could serve as a back-up for America's "time-out" scheme, under which Netanyahu was supposed to slow down settlement building and carry out a second redeployment.

Unlike the latest Israeli proposal, the Egyptian-French initiative is unlikely to link a second redeployment to the opening of the final status negotiations. The reason is that both Cairo and Paris have little faith in Netanyahu's readiness to honour his contractual obligations.

The framework of the joint initiative was broached during a visit which French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine paid to Cairo last week.

'Big numbers, high calibre'

Undeterred by the Luxor atrocity, the largest gathering of media people and advertisers will go ahead as scheduled in Cairo next May

Members of the Middle East and Africa chapters of the International Advertising Association (IAA) said they were determined to hold the 36th IAA Congress in Cairo as arranged from 10 to 13 May 1998, reports **Nevine Khalil**. Speaking to the press on Saturday, after a meeting to assess the impact of the terrorist attack in Luxor on their plans, organisers decided to forge ahead. The conference will be held under the auspices of President Hosni Mubarak.

"One has to allow time for the wounds to heal, but we are looking to the future, and the future says that Egypt is the place where the conference will be held," said Jean-Claude Boulos, IAA vice-president and Middle East/Africa area director. "We are not going to change anything to do with this."

Boulos added that terrorist attacks could happen anywhere and at any time, and that by the beginning of next year foreigners will have overcome the shock and return to Egypt. "People will forget and they will come," he said.

Talal Dhulaymi, IAA corporate member and former regional director, stressed that Egypt has the backing of the whole region in hosting the conference. "All present are unaffected by what was said about [cancelling] the congress," Dhulaymi said. "Our position remains the same and our support for the Egyptian chapter is steadfast." He added that the success of the Cairo congress is a priority for all Arab delegates, who will "exert their utmost efforts to promote this event."

Nabil Osman, director of the State Information Service, said that Egypt has "very extensive experience of organising international and regional conferences", and that the Luxor attack had to be put in "the right context", pointing out that there were terrorist attacks in the US, Japan and Europe. "Luxor was the result of a certain security failure, which has been addressed through new security measures that everyone is aware of," said Osman. "This sorry event in Luxor should not affect the overall image of Egypt, which is characterised by hospitality and compassion."

The IAA, the only global partnership bringing together media, agencies, advertisers and market communications professionals, will be holding their 36th congress under the title "Interaction: The 21st century". The gathering takes place every two years, but this is the first time it has come to the region. It will also be the last congress this century and will coincide with the IAA's 60th anniversary. Organisers aim to draw the greatest number of participants yet, hopefully as many as 2,000, but it is still unclear how successful they will be.

Mustafa As'ad, former IAA world president, said that it was "very difficult" to provide an estimate of participant numbers until one month before the event. "According to our experience, 40 per cent usually register only 2-3 months before," he said. "Our forecast [of 2,000 participants] is based on previous conferences, responses from our friends, and the positive vibrations we are feeling."

"Egypt has it all" said As'ad, "and everyone of us will be playing the role of ambassador for this congress." A "huge" delegation is expected from Britain, which will host the congress in the year 2000, as well as "big, big, big numbers and calibre" from the Arab world, according to As'ad. He added that within the next six months, "personal contacts, experience and previous achievements will convince delegates to come".

According to Galal Zaki, secretary-general of the 36th IAA Congress, delegates from the region are assisting in promoting the conference to the world. "We have great aspirations for Egypt and hopefully our partners in the region will support our drive," noted Zaki, adding that half of the participants at the Cairo congress will be from the region. He also expects that only one-fifth of the delegates will be IAA members, while the rest will be mega high-tech and media companies, as has previously been the case.

Boulos said it was the "responsibility of all the Arabs" to make the Cairo gathering "the most successful [IAA] conference of the 20th century." He added that ongoing contacts aim to ensure that "the best people come to the conference [which] brings together the top marketing people in the fields of advertising and media."

A special session will focus on various developments in the fields of interactive communications, marketing, research and advertising in the Middle East and Africa. Another will showcase interaction past, present and future, and on the last day, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak will preside over a session dedicated to children under the age of 5, entitled 'Project of Hope'.

Hassan Hamdi, chairman of the organising committee, said that the patronage of both President Mubarak and Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak will give the conference a "boost". Hamdi added that the sponsorship of sports events, a multi-billion dollar business, will be one new topic to be discussed in Cairo. "Sponsorship can make or break a sports event and is a major source of funding," noted Hamdi, a former football star.

Alongside the different sessions, in which former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali will be a guest speaker, congress activities will include an exhibition of the latest high-tech innovations, gala dinners and excursions. Interactive sessions promise to bring people from different parts of the world together, via satellite video conferencing and the Internet. Information kiosks will allow visitors to access information about Egypt and special events while staying in touch with their offices back home.

The Congress's chairwoman Loula Zaklama said that the organisers have launched an active marketing campaign for the conference, which began during the Egyptian night at the end of the 1996 Korea gathering. "President Mubarak invited delegates via a video wall address to attend next year's Cairo meeting," she said. Since then, the 36th congress has been promoted in numerous forums, as well as by the Cairo congress's roaming ambassador in Europe, Abdel-Aziz Farid.

Easing the Cairo-Doha strain

Saudi Arabia is reportedly attempting to mediate in order to defuse the tension in Egyptian-Qatari relations

A visit by a Saudi envoy to Cairo on Tuesday has triggered speculation that a mediation effort is being made by Riyadh to try and halt the decay in Egyptian-Qatari relations, reports **Dina Ezzat**. Barely hours after Abdel-Aziz Al-Khweiter, a Saudi state minister, met with President Hosni Mubarak, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa boarded a plane to Saudi Arabia, for an evening of talks, accompanied by presidential adviser Osama El-Baz.

Al-Khweiter delivered a message from King Fahd to Mubarak but declined to divulge its contents. When asked about the strain in Egyptian-Qatari relations, the Saudi official responded: "As an Arab citizen, I believe that an understanding between the two countries would be of benefit to the whole Arab world."

Al-Khweiter's visit to Cairo and Moussa's departure for Riyadh came at a time when Egyptian officials were saying that a quarrel with Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassem did not mean that Egypt and Qatar have themselves fallen out. "The man has made a mistake and we will deal with him," Moussa said earlier. "As far as Egypt and Qatar are concerned, that is another issue. I want to draw a distinction between Qatari relations [with Egypt] and what has been said by the Qatari foreign minister."

Moussa affirmed that the problem should be addressed "calmly". Egyptian foreign policy has been working hard to encourage good inter-Arab relations and these efforts should not be wasted simply "because someone chose to forget their manners and insulted Egypt, its president and people, using language that he should not have used," he said.

Moussa was referring to comments made by Bin Jassem last month, accusing Egypt of "lying" and "insulting" Qatar and "changing its coat regularly." At the root of the quarrel was the Egyptian decision to boycott the fourth Middle East/North Africa conference for regional economic cooperation that was held in the Qatari capital on 16-18 November. A war of words raged between newspapers in the two countries, with the Qatari press accusing Egypt of backing a failed 1996 coup against the emir and successfully lobbying Arab states to boycott the Doha conference.

Egypt denied the accusations and briefly recalled its ambassador to Doha, Mohamed El-Menissi, in protest.

When El-Menissi went back to Doha, he was hoping that the problem "would be contained for the sake of the good relations that should bind all Arab countries together." But nevertheless the war of words raged on, unchecked.

For Moussa, "the insults hurled by the foreign minister do not represent the feelings of the Qatari people. Relations between the Egyptian and Qatari peoples are too strong and too deep to be affected by such insults and the atypical attitude of one individual, even if he is the foreign minister."

Speaking to *Al-Ahram Weekly* from his office in Doha, El-Menissi said both Egypt and Qatar do seem willing to work at improving relations. "This week, I met with Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed El-Mahmoud, and we exchanged views about the current problem. It was clear from this meeting that the Qatari side is keen to overcome the crisis."

Acting on their own?

Following the Luxor massacre many questions have been asked. Did the assailants act on their own? Is the government ready to negotiate? **Khaled Dawoud** sought some answers

Statements issued by Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya this week appear to be aimed at creating the impression that the Luxor massacre has caused a division within the ranks of the militant group. Although the group claimed responsibility for the brutal killing of 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians on 17 November, expatriate members and so-called "moderate" elements at home are now circulating the theory that the assailants acted on their own without orders from their leadership.

Montasser El-Zayyat, an Islamist lawyer who was detained for seven months in 1995 for allegedly acting as the Gama'a spokesman, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that he had serious doubts that the six militants who were killed after carrying out the massacre consulted their leadership in advance.

He claimed that they were victims of the government's suppression of militants in southern Egypt over the past five years, and that they acted out of desperation.

Al-Morabitoun, a magazine published by the Gama'a abroad, also printed an article whose writer said that he clearly disagreed with what took place in Luxor. According to Gama'a sources, the writer is Osama Rushdi, a second-generation Gama'a leader who is believed to be living in Holland. He is one of 14 Gama'a members living abroad whose extradition is sought by the government.

The article, titled "The Luxor incident and the policy of the blocked road," read: "Honesty and courage call upon me to announce my deep sorrow and sadness for what happened in Luxor, and for the death of a large number of innocent victims who have nothing to do with the on-going conflict between the Egyptian regime and the Islamic current, led by Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya."

The writer urged members of the group to exercise "self-restraint" because "winning a battle is not important if we stand to lose ourselves and the goal that we have been fighting for." The writer added that despite the grievances group members might have against the government, "it is not possible, and it is not religiously accepted, that we reciprocate injustice with a similar injustice or even a greater injustice."

He claimed that a statement which was found on one of the attackers after he was shot dead indicated that "those brothers acted on their own." In the statement to which he alluded, the assailants apologised to their leaders for the failure of their first mission and indicated that they staged the Luxor attack instead.

Meanwhile, and despite President Hosni Mubarak's declared opposition to any "dialogue with terrorist groups", reports on contacts and mediation efforts between the government and militants continued to circulate. One of the expatriate Gama'a leaders, Yasser Serri, told Arab newspapers and international news agencies that a "semi-official" Egyptian delegate contacted him to negotiate terms for a dialogue. Serri was sentenced to death in absentia in 1994 for his role in the assassination attempt against the then Prime Minister Atef Sedki.

But both Islamist figures and security sources denied Serri's claim. "Serri only represents himself. He is seeking media attention by circulating such reports," said one Islamist source.

A security source who spoke to the *Weekly* on condition of anonymity agreed. "Serri is nothing but a fax machine, sending out statements which do not reflect anyone's position except his own," said the source. Since he managed to escape to London, Serri has been running the "Islamic Monitoring Centre" which reports on alleged violations of human rights of militants all over the Arab world.

The security source also brushed aside the reports on mediation efforts between the Gama'a and the government. "If we were seeking to negotiate, why would Egypt make a fuss with countries like Britain in order to gain the extradition of the terrorists living there?" The source added that the mediation reports were circulated by the Islamists themselves "in order to ease the pressure they are now coming under in the European countries where they live. They want to tell those governments: wait, maybe we can reach a solution."

The security source said that one problem which would face the government if it decided to take the "dialogue" offer seriously would be the fragmentation of the Gama'a and its expatriate leadership. "We do not know whom to talk to. Even Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman [now serving a life term in New York after he was convicted in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing] has no control over the group," the source said. Moreover, assuming that the government managed to reach a deal with the Gama'a, "what about the Jihad and other groups? Would they accept what we agree, or would they start making their own conditions as well?" the source asked.

Security sources and other analysts also excluded the possibility that the Luxor assailants acted on their own. They said that the timing of the attack, and the professional way in which it was carried out, leave no doubt that this was a well-planned operation that required advance preparations. "We have to be stupid to believe that this was an operation carried out by a group of young men without orders from their expatriate leadership," said one security source.

So, what does the future hold? The Gama'a militants, on the one hand, are expected to intensify their efforts to convince the government to sit down with them and negotiate their demands, mainly the release of prisoners and a halt of military trials that usually end with death sentences for the militants. In this respect, the six so-called "historic" Gama'a leaders who made an appeal from behind bars to their followers in July to stop anti-government violence were expected to affirm their cease-fire call.

The government, on the other hand, is reportedly working on a new security plan in which all options will remain open, including a major "search and arrest" campaign against militant suspects in Upper Egypt, informed sources told the *Weekly*.

The Gama'a, in a statement issued last Thursday, called upon the army not to take part with the police in cracking down on the group. The statement added that the intervention of the army "would not solve a problem, and would only make matters worse."

The Islamist lawyer, Zayyat, told the *Weekly* that he expected "worse things to happen if the situation continues as it is right now. There has to be a solution, and security measures alone over the past five years did not bring about any results. So, there has to be a dialogue."



Abdel-Rahman's parents despair over their son's fate — *photo: Magdi Abdel-Sayed*

Portrait of the terrorist as a young man

Medhat Abdel-Rahman, the only Luxor assailant whose body has been identified, began his career with the Gama'a Al-Islamiya selling *fuul* and *taamiya*. **Mona El-Nahhas** pays a visit to El-Badari

Medhat Abdel-Rahman, one of the six Luxor assailants, condemned his own parents as unbelievers and smashed their television set, which he considered to be an un-Islamic device, shortly before his sudden disappearance in 1993. According to the parents, Medhat fell into the militants' trap after they gave him a menial job, selling *fuul* and *taamiya* sandwiches for LE3 a day. He began growing a beard.

Medhat was the only attacker whose body could be identified by police. The identities of the other five remain a mystery, raising the spectre of a nightmare scenario in which a new generation of militants, with no police records, might have emerged on the scene.

Medhat hails from El-Badari, a town in the governorate of Assiut, surrounded by sugar-cane fields, about 420kms south of Cairo. It was once a hotbed for militants, before police gained the upper hand.

According to an Interior Ministry statement, Medhat was arrested for two months in 1993 for attacking police guards in the southern governorate of Qena. Following his release, he departed for Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he received military training and became involved with leaders of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya.

The people of El-Badari were reluctant at first to guide *Al-Ahram Weekly*'s reporter and photographer to the Abdel-Rahmans' residence. A Coptic volunteer quickly disappeared after he pointed at a small room, which looked more like a cottage, located at the end of a dirt road on agricultural land.

Inside, Medhat's parents told the *Weekly* that when they read their son's name in the newspapers, following the Luxor attack, it was the first time they had received news of him since he left home four years earlier.

"What happened was a terrible shock to us," the father, Mohamed Abdel-Rahman, said morosely. The mother, Saadeya Abdel-Qader, added: "We did not believe that our son could commit such a savage crime."

The two sat on boxes made of palm-tree fronds, placed next to each other to serve as a sofa, inside the small mudbrick room, which was dimly-lit by a gas lamp. The roof over their heads was made of hay.

"It was only when we received the corpse that we really believed that he had done it," said the mother, who was dressed in simple black clothes and a black head-cover. "We buried the corpse and grieved, but we also thanked God for everything."

The father, wearing a brown *galabiya* and covering his shoulders with a shawl, recounted how his son had turned militant.

Medhat, the father said, completed his military service in 1990 after taking a high-school degree in agriculture. Failing to find a job, he was easy prey for the militants, who offered to help him out. They found him a job, selling *fuul* and *taamiya* sandwiches for LE3 a day.

Shortly afterwards, he grew a long beard and stopped watching television, a habit which the militants consider sinful. He later smashed the family television set, to prevent other members of his family from watching it.

"I was astonished by this bizarre behaviour, but at first I failed to understand the reason behind the change in his character," the father said. "Once I realised what was going on, I advised him to break with these men [the militants] and return to his senses, but he turned a deaf ear to all my pleas."

The father said that he went as far as to threaten to divorce the mother, as a means of putting pressure on the son, but to no avail.

"His brothers, Mohamed and Ahmed, stood firmly against him, but he flew into a rage and described all of us as unbelievers," the mother said. "And then he left the house in 1993, accompanied by a group of bearded men. He never came back and we never heard from him. We lost all hope of ever tracking him down."

The parents expressed their hope that police would now release Medhat's two brothers, who have been detained in the nearby city of Assiut for the past two and a half years. "They have nothing to do with terrorism and they were always opposed to their brother's wrongdoings. Officials at the Assiut security department had previously told us they would be released only if we informed them of Medhat's hideout. How could we know?" the father said.

Now that Medhat is dead, his family have breathed a sigh of relief, believing his death will bring their troubles to an end. "The police used to raid our house twice a month and they arrested me more than once to get information on him," the father said. "I had to stop working because of all these problems and things were just going from bad to worse. How could I support my family when I had no job?"

His voice trembling, the father continued: "I did nothing wrong. I fought in the 1973 war and I know the true meaning of patriotism. It's unfair that I should have to bear the consequences of my son's criminal acts."

The mother added: "Medhat has destroyed our lives. Now we scrape a living on our small piece of land. It's the only thing we have left. Our relatives and neighbours have abandoned us, because they didn't want to get involved."

Fact-finding MPs underline Luxor lessons

A parliamentary fact-finding committee wants the socio-economic roots of militant violence to be addressed. **Gamal Essam El-Din** reports

More than 20 members of the People's Assembly and Shura Council paid a 24-hour visit to Luxor last week. There they came to the conclusion, which so many people have reached before, that victory in the war against terrorism requires much more than a police confrontation. The committee's report also confirmed that the massacre has dealt a crushing blow to the city's once-thriving tourism industry, which is now facing a grim future unless urgent countermeasures can be taken.

During the visit, the parliamentarians held a meeting at Luxor's Conference Hall with a large number of hoteliers, bazaar shop owners and souvenir manufacturers as well as with the city's new security chief, Maj. Gen. Mohamed Sadek Abdel-Nour.

Salah El-Tarouti, chairman of the Assembly's Information, Tourism and Culture Committee, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that in their report the parliamentarians concluded that addressing the violence problem strictly from a security perspective was not enough. Although he expressed the belief that there were "foreign hands" behind the massacre, El-Tarouti said: "The fact remains that Islamist violence is largely due to deep-rooted socio-economic problems. It is true that in the last few years the government has made greater budgetary allocations to the development of Upper Egypt, but the massacre showed again that militant violence still feeds on widespread poverty, unemployment and [people's] humiliation [at the hands of the police forces]," El-Tarouti added.

He complained that in the past the government had not listened to parliament's recommendations. In November 1992, the Assembly's Culture and Tourism Committee made as many as 20 recommendations on the necessity of providing tourist and archaeological sites with greater protection by providing helicopters and anti-terrorist squads. According to El-Tarouti, the committee had also recommended dividing Luxor into four administrative sectors and establishing a well-equipped police station on the western bank of the Nile.

The report prepared by the parliamentarians quoted Abul-Nour as saying the archaeological area on the western bank is vast and of a mountainous nature, and will require a new plan for police deployment and the establishment of checkpoints. Abul-Nour also told the visitors that the armed forces will take on responsibility for the security of the archaeological area and the hills surrounding it, using sophisticated night-vision equipment to detect any militant infiltrators.

The message the locals conveyed to the visitors is that the lives of thousands of them will be affected, now that the city has been abandoned by tourists. Bazaar owners and souvenir manufacturers said they will no longer be able to pay the rents of their shops. "These shops employ 80 per cent of Luxor's young men and are their main source of livelihood," the report said.

Yehia Shalaan, who represents Luxor in the Assembly, said that he had tried for two years as MP to convey to top government officials the administrative and security problems of Luxor, "but without any concrete results." He added: "The Luxor city council meets in Cairo and is headed by a Cairene who does not have a good grounding in the city's real problems. It is not even clear whether the city is still affiliated to the Qena Governorate or is administratively independent."

Mustafa Haggag, a former chairman of the Luxor city council, said the city's inhabitants had to speak out and vent their grievances, following President Hosni Mubarak's condemnation of previous security policies. "The inhabitants are treated as eighth class citizens [by the police]," Haggag said. According to the report, the humiliation of citizens at the hands of police in Upper Egypt was particularly evident in Luxor.

Abdel-Rehim El-Ghoul, chairman of the Assembly's Sports and Youth Committee, urged the city's new security chief to introduce a new and more "humane" approach.

Following the Luxor visit, the Shura Council's Tourism Committee held a meeting to review the impact of the massacre on the tourism industry. The obvious conclusion was that the industry, which nets around $3 billion annually and is the main source of income for about 1 million families, is bound to suffer greatly. Abdel-Salam Abdel-Ghaffar, the committee's chairman, said that occupancy rates in Luxor hotels have plummeted from 90 to around 10 percent. The committee recommended that the bank debts of hotel owners should be rescheduled.

Salah Montasser, a committee member and a senior columnist at *Al-Ahram* said that 10 telephone lines which were installed near Hatshepsut's Temple at the time the opera *Aida* was performed in October had been removed once the performances had come to an end. "Archaeology officials asked the Telecommunications Authority to keep the lines in place" but their request was turned down, said Montasser. "This means that the archaeological area was isolated from the whole world at the time the massacre took place," Montasser said.

Tears of anger at Luxor

The Ministry of Culture is organising a roses-and-candles ceremony at the Hatshepsut Temple next week to pay tribute to the massacre victims, reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

In the 7th century BC, the ancient city of Thebes, now known as Luxor, was invaded by the Assyrians, who plundered its treasures and then razed it to the ground. "Her strength was infinite," wrote one historian at the time, "yet she was carried away into captivity."

On 17 November, Luxor was again taken captive by terrorism. As a result of the carnage at the Hatshepsut Temple, the city, which includes some of the world's greatest monuments, has been abandoned by tourists.

In a message to the world expressing the city's anguish at what happened and its determination not to give in to terrorism, the Ministry of Culture is organising a "funeral ceremony" at the Hatshepsut Temple on 10 December to pay tribute to the fallen victims.

"It will be a symbolic gesture on the part of all Egyptians, conveying to the families of those who lost their lives on our land the sorrow we feel at what has happened and our refusal to capitulate before terrorism," Culture Minister Farouk Hosni told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

The move appears to have been organised in response to the panic which swept through sections of the Western media following the tragedy.

"Through this tribute, we are telling the Western press and media that their hysterical reaction will only add to the misery and anguish," Hosni said.

Echoing these sentiments, Samir Gharib, head of the ministry's cultural development fund, said the ceremony was intended to show the world that Luxor does not deserve to be ostracised.

"Now people [in the West] believe that there is a bomb in every restaurant and a grenade in every temple. This hysteria is playing into the hands of the terrorists," Gharib said.

This is why the ceremony, which has been called "Message from Thebes," is being organised and will be broadcast to the world by satellite television.

Hosni, urging "all Egypt lovers to flock back to Luxor," said: "The place is no more or less dangerous than it was two weeks ago. We call upon all tourists not to join this boycott of Egypt, because it means that they are in effect joining the terrorists in their heinous campaign."

A "martyrs' anthem" will be played at the opening of the ceremony and will be followed by a short speech which will be made by an undisclosed "world-famous personality." The speech will convey condolences to the families of the victims and also a message of defiance to terrorism, Gharib said.

Verdi's *Tears of Anger* will be played, to express Egyptians' condemnation of the massacre. The audience will then light candles to commemorate the victims, and place roses at the scene of the slaughter.

Hosni said that he, and all other officials taking part, will be there simply in their capacity as ordinary citizens.

The idea of the ceremony was first floated by columnists in the Arabic-language press, who suggested that an event should be organised to express the people's outrage. "We need to rise above the atrocity. This cannot be achieved by ignoring it, but only by acting so as to wipe out its consequences," one columnist wrote.

Tourist guides, whose very livelihood has been threatened by the mass exodus of tourists, organised a memorial service at the temple yesterday, at which representatives of Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawi of Al-Azhar Mosque and Pope Shenuda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church attended.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**


Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli soldiers during demonstrations that erupted in the West Bank earlier this week calling for the release of Palestinian prisoners — photo: Khaled Zighari

West Bank erupts in anger

The plight of Palestinian prisoner Itaf Elyan ended in compromise after a tense and bloody week during which demonstrations, sit-ins and sporadic clashes with Israeli soldiers took place. Khaled Amayreh reports from Jerusalem

Violent demonstrations broke out all over the West Bank this week in which protesters, throwing stones and petrol bombs, clashed with Israeli army soldiers in scenes reminiscent of the Palestinian uprising, or Intifada. Israeli soldiers responded by firing rounds of live ammunition and rubber bullets at the protesters.

The impetus behind the recent clashes was the abduction and continued detention by the Israeli authorities of Islamic Jihad activist Itaf Elyan, who, ever since her arrest on 21 October had been on hunger strike, vowing to continue until either "freedom or martyrdom." However, the underlying causes of Palestinian indignation *and exasperation was the enduring plight of Palestinian political* prisoners in Israel including an estimated 800 so-called administrative detainees, who are interned as virtual hostages pending an improvement in the political climate and the security situation. Administrative detainees, like Elyan, are neither charged nor tried, and their terms of detention (usually six months) can be renewed indefinitely, occasionally to six years.

Elyan, who had been released from Israeli detention early this year after serving a 10-year prison sentence for "endangering the security of the state," was arrested in circumstances amounting to an abduction rather than a formal arrest. Elyan was travelling from Bethlehem, her home town, to Birzeit University reportedly to attend a memorial marking the second anniversary of the assassina*tion by Mossad agents of former Islamic Jihad leader* Fathi Shekaki in Malta.

A routine Israeli army roadblock erected on the rugged Wadi Al-Nar (an extremely dangerous bypass road opened by the Israeli army five years ago as an alternative travel route to the historical Hebron-Jerusalem highway) stopped the car in which Elyan was traveling. The soldiers manning the roadblocks took the identity cards of the passengers to make the usual security checks. Unfortunately, Elyan's identity card still carries the label "ex-prisoner, dangerous person". The soldiers, acting rather like pirates, forced her out of the car, handcuffed her, and took her to a detention lock-up. Forty-eight hours later, she was served "a three-month administrative detention."

Elyan couldn't take it anymore. She felt that the Israelis were determined to break her and probably bully her into leaving the country altogether, and it was in response to this treatment that she decided to challenge the Israeli state rather than "accept the things we can't change."

Upon arrival at the Ramle lockup, she went on hunger strike, demanding that she either be put on trial or be released. The Israeli prison authorities told Elyan her demands were "wishful thinking."

Reports of Elyan's hunger strike and rumours that her health was deteriorating rapidly raised tensions, which erupted in demonstrations and rallies, first at West Bank colleges and later on the streets.

At Bethlehem University, Islamic Jihad supporters warned that "if anything happened to sister Elyan, we would carry out a martyrdom operation in the heart of Tel Aviv."

Two days earlier on 18 November, Israeli soldiers guarding Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, who was participating in a religious celebration at 'Rachel's Tomb' in Bethlehem, shot and killed 8-year-old Ali Al-Jawarish, a Palestinian first grader, while *returning from school. According to eye-witnesses, Al-Jawarish* was waving his hand to the IDF sniper thinking the soldier was going to photograph him. The soldier shot him in the head. Five days later, he was pronounced "clinically dead."

The protests continued, gathering even more momentum after the funeral of Al-Jawarish. The situation deteriorated further on 22 November, when Israeli soldiers manning the roadblock north of Bethlehem shot dead Jimmy Kanawati, son of a prominent local Christian family, allegedly because he "refused to heed orders to stop."

On Friday, Elyan smuggled a letter from her hospital bed at Ramle Prison, urging the Palestinians not to let her down.

She pointed out that "while as a religious Muslim, I abhor suicide, there is no other means available to me to protest my unlawful detention; I will continue my fast until freedom or martyrdom."

Elyan's letter, which was published in all major Arabic dailies, fueled the anger of Palestinians, already seething at a peace process that has been transformed into a farce.

On Saturday, widespread demonstrations and protests were held throughout the West Bank from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the South. The most violent of them took place, not surprisingly, in Bethlehem, where as many as 40 Palestinians were injured when Israeli soldiers opened fire using rubber bullets, tear gas, and reportedly some live ammunition on an estimated 5,000 Palestinian demonstrators, chanting "freedom for our prisoners" and "freedom for Itaf Elayan."

The demonstrations were led by Muslim and Christian religious leaders who sought to put up a show of national unity to refute recent claims by Israel of Christian-Muslim rifts in Bethlehem.

Scores of protesters suffered respiratory injuries as a result of gas inhalation, and ambulances were taking the injured to nearby hos*pitals well into the night. A Palestinian Legislative Council member*, Salah Al Ta'amari, was injured, and the stage was set for further protests the next morning.

Meanwhile, Israeli representatives were holding talks with Elyan's relatives. It was reported that a tacit agreement had been reached between the two, which meant that Elyan's 3-month detention term would not be renewed in return for her breaking the hunger strike. Elyan accepted the deal, and ended her strike on Monday.

'Unity that includes us'

SPLA leader John Garang, speaking to Gamal Nkrumah, outlined his terms for a united Sudan

John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and head of the military command of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Sudanese opposition's umbrella organisation, has been in Cairo this week upon the invitation of President Hosni Mubarak. The visit, "long overdue" says the SPLA leader, represents a radical departure from Egypt's traditional Sudan policy. To date, Egypt has shied away from officially welcoming the SPLA leader so as not to be charged with advocating the division of Sudan. Mubarak stressed that Egypt only wishes to play a "facilitating role" in the Sudanese conflict.

Egypt upholds Sudanese territorial integrity as the cornerstone of its Sudan policy. But serious efforts are being made in Cairo to put an end to the hardships of the Sudanese people who have been fighting a debilitating civil war, that has claimed 1.5 million lives, in the past 14 years. Egyptian officials say that the country's efforts are not meant to duplicate, but to augment, the ongoing peace endeavours of the seven-nation East African Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) — the regional grouping which includes Sudan and its neighbours Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The majority of the IGADD members are hostile to Bashir and his Islamist regime. Presidential political adviser Osama El-Baz told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, "Garang's visit is a chance to reinforce Egypt's endeavours to create a more peaceful climate in the Nile Valley and Horn of Africa region."

Garang's unprecedented official visit to Egypt follows that of Sudanese First Vice-President Al-Zobeir Mohamed Saleh who paid an unexpected visit to Cairo last month. But Egyptian observers say that there are no immediate plans for Cairo to play a mediating role between the National Islamic Front (NIF) government in Khartoum and Sudanese opposition forces who, following in the SPLA's footsteps, are waging war against Sudan's state army and the various militias that support the NIF government.

The civil war in Sudan, "which is no longer confined to the southern half of the country," Garang stressed, has an infinite capacity to inspire intense and impassioned controversy. Many in Africa south of the Sahara see it as a war between Africans and Arabs. In Africa, Garang is seen as a hero and a champion of African rights. In the Arab world, he is eyed with suspicion and is sometimes seen as the devil incarnate. The Arab media traditionally portrayed Garang as a separatist die-hard bent on splitting Sudan in two.

But the SPLA leader denies such charges. "We are not against Arabs, but non-Arabs in Sudan must enjoy the same political and socio-economic rights as Sudanese of Arab descent. We are not against Islam, *but religion must be separated* from the state. We cannot be against Islam because the majority of our people are Muslim," Garang told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.


Garang during his meeting with President Mubarak

Farouk Abu Eissa, chief NDA spokesman in Cairo, told the *Weekly* that Garang's visit is a perfect opportunity to dispel the image of Garang as one who intends to do irrevocable damage to Sudan's territorial integrity. Islam and Arab interests. At a lecture delivered at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, Garang was *at pains to allay Arab fears. The single most im*portant question underlying these anxieties appears to be: will self-determination for the people of southern Sudan within Garang's proposed confederation mean the secession of the southern half of the country? Vast and unexploited oil reserves, important mineral deposits and tremendous water resources for agricultural development are at stake.

Garang himself insists that the SPLA is a unionist, not a separatist, movement. "We are for Sudanese unity, but not unity for unity's sake. Perhaps what confuses some people is that we are for a unity that includes us — that includes all Sudanese. We are for a united Sudan which will give all its people their rights on an equal basis. Our principled position is for the unity of our country — Sudan."

Garang insists that the many deep-seated prob*lems that have plagued Sudan since it gained in*dependence in 1956 must be addressed. "The injustices done to the politically marginalised ethnic and religious groups in Sudan must be redressed. The movement towards a new Sudan requires an input from Egypt. We need to evolve a Sudanese communality with which we all identify and to which we pledge our undivided allegiance," Garang told the *Weekly*. "Why should we assume that the northerners are more concerned about the unity of the country *than the southerners? Natural*ly, southerners are not keen on an enforced Sudanese unity that relegates them to second class status.

"The confederal proposal presented by the SPLA at the Nairobi peace talks last month was a tactical move and a deliberate SPLA negotiating position. We came out with several initiatives. Confederation was one proposal. We have been consistent over the past 15 years over our commitment to the unity of Sudan."

Garang refuted rumours of an impending split in his movement. "We survived vicious government offensives in the early 1990s — which took place at a time when leading figures such as Reik Machar deserted ranks and joined the government forces," *he stressed*. Machar formed the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM) which cut a deal with Khartoum in April and he now chairs the *Sudanese government's special council* responsible for southern Sudanese issues — the Southern Sudanese Coordination Council (SSCC) composed of southerners who hate or fear Garang.

"We have appointed governors based inside the five liberated regions now under our control — Bahr El-Ghazal, Upper Nile, Equatoria, South Blue Nile and South Kordofan. Each of these provinces has a SPLA governor who is in charge of the liberated areas of the governorate," he said.

Garang's main aim is to achieve a separation of state from religion. "Sudan is composed of more than 300 ethnic groups. It has more than 50 distinct languages. We have ethnic diversity and religious diversity and we must avoid those things that divide us. We must look for a Sudanese commonality that transcends localisms. We must repeal all laws that are religiously based. There must be a constitutional separation of religion and the state. Let us not make any particular religion the state religion. The NIF government rejected our proposal for the separation of religion and the *state, and so we countered with our confederal* proposal. A constitutional separation between religion and state will then be handled separately by *the two confederal states. An Islamic state* is untenable to southerners.

"In Nairobi we put the government and its allies on the spot. We exposed them *as having a hidden* agenda. The suggestion of a confederal arrangement cannot be looked at in isolation from what provoked it. The government insisted on an Islamic state. We, therefore, opted for a confederation. Constitutional niceties can be worked out later."

And, how did the southerners in Egypt receive Garang? Preserving the status quo is no longer acceptable to many Sudanese — especially in the south, the Nuba Mountains and southern Blue Nile regions peopled by non-Arabised Sudanese. Most see Garang as the only leader capable of steering his movement through a difficult period.

Edited by **Khaled Dawoud**

Tehran in from the cold

Tehran's hosting of the Islamic summit next week is a product of Netanyahu's extremism and Khatami's moderation, writes Safa Haeri

Since the commemoration of Persia's 2500 years of almost uninterrupted monarchy in Persepolis in 1971, the Islamic Summit in Iran is the first of its kind. To give it maximum lustre and glory, the relatively impoverished Islamic Republic has set aside an "astronomic" sum of more than $80 million for the occasion.

The combination of Israel's policy under Binyamin Netanyahu, who has rocked the foundations of the peace process with the Palestinians in particular and the Arabs in general, on one hand, and the astonishing victory of Ayatollah Khatami in the presidential elections, on the other, has greatly helped Tehran in organising this eighth summit of the Jeddah-based Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

"Boycotted by the US, its relations strained with the European Union and isolated in the international scene, it was very important for the Islamic Republic to host this conference and give it maximum splendour. *If we have succeeded*, it is due to the double effect of the victory of Mr Khatami, who seems to be liked by the Arabs, and the excesses of Mr Netanyahu, who is despised by them," one Iranian political analyst in Tehran said on condition of anonymity.

There seems to be an agreement, however, among most of the participants that Tehran, because of its radical opposition to the current peace process, and the fact that it has no relations with the United States, the only nation with a make-or-break role in the region, is not the best place for such a meeting.

"Arab nations are certain that this particular summit will achieve very little other than en*hancing the position of the* Iranian Islamic Republic both in the region and in the world, something most of them bitterly fought against until recently. But since Mr Netanyahu threw the Oslo agreement into the sea, and since Washington continues to adopt double standards in the region, closing its eyes to Israeli abuses while opening them wide when it comes to the Arabs, there was both a willingness, albeit reluctant, and an obligation to come to Tehran," commented a senior Arab diplomat.

"It is a great achievement for the Iranian ruling mullahs to bring the Sunni-dominated Arab and *Muslim states together in Tehran, the cradle* of Shi'ism. It is a clear signal to the United States that there are limits for imposing, unilaterally, *their will on others," said Rosemary* Holis, director of Middle East Programmes at the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London.

High on the agenda are the question of Palestine, the bloody situation in Afghanistan, the Bosnian problem, the thorny question of Kashmir, the future of Iraq and, above all, the Jerusalem "time bomb", probably one of the few questions, if not the only one, that enjoys unanimity among all the 54 kings, heads of state, prime ministers and state representatives who will take part in the Tehran summit.

Analysts argue that on the Palestinian issue, one of the few issues where there is some convergence between the participants, nothing concrete will result, "*whatever the OIC might have* to say in its final communiqué". On Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims can do nothing but continue to give money and *weapons, for the fi*nal solution lies with the US and the EU. Iraq will remain a pariah; on Kashmir, one notes that many OIC members, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, have closer relations with India than Pakistan. On Afghanistan, which will not attend the summit, nothing can be achieved as long as the Taliban are recognised by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, while Iran continues to recognise the government of the former president, Borhaneddine *Rabbani*. As a matter of fact, though Mr Rabbani and other Iranian-backed Afghan leaders opposed to the Taliban are now in Iran attending an *Afghan Peace Seminar, the Iranian* hosts have not invited them to the summit — a major concession to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

As the summit has become *something of an* Iranian affair, with its Iranian side definitely overshadowing other Arab and Middle Eastern aspects, the event has "far-reaching" significance for the Islamic Republic, says Dr Alireza Nurizadeh, the secretary of the London-based Centre for Arab-Iranian Studies, an independent *institute* dedicated to improving relations between the Sunni Arab and Shi'ite Iranian worlds.

"This is the clearest *signal that, under the* presidency of Mohamed Khatami, the policy of the ruling mullahs is moving away from revolutionary rhetoric towards pragmatism and international logic. Just think of a regime which used to shout day and night its eternal opposition to *estekbar* (imperialism), its commitment to the *destruction of the Zionist* entity, and its will to fight Arab reactionary puppets to the end. Now imagine the same regime rolling out red carpets, dusting off royal residences. *Just* think of Mr Khatami walking side by side with those same personalities who were being insulted until quite recently. If we agree *that the* summit will achieve nothing in terms of the major issues facing the Muslims and the Arabs, in contrast, it will put an end to the revolutionary *process* in Iran, and this is a major achievement, for it can herald a more peaceful and prosperous region in the future," Mr Nurizadeh observed.

Iran is hosting this summit at a time of high domestic turbulence, as the powerful conservative mullahs who were severely defeated *in the last* presidential race are bracing themselves to bring to trial Ayatollah Hosseinali Montazeri, one of the last prestigious Iranian grand *ayatollahs*, as well as Ayatollah Ahmed Azari Qomi, a senior cleric. In recent weeks, both have publicly voiced their opposition to the *present leader*, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Charged for "treason, complicity with foreign intelligence, and subversive anti-state activities", the two *men face* death sentences.

In a letter to Khamenei, Ayatollah Montazeri is reported to have demanded: "You, who cannot assure the security of one man like me, how are you going to guarantee the safety of so many important guests?"



Democracy, Indian-style

Throughout the sub-continent, governments are finding they can't make a democratic omelette without breaking eggs, writes Eqbal Ahmad


Indian President and caretaker Prime Minister *(photo: Reuters)*

South Asia is in turmoil. In Pakistan, what began as a battle between the executive and judiciary has now escalated into a constitutional deadlock so serious that some fear for the survival of the democratic system which was restored in 1988, after eleven years of military rule. In Bangladesh, the main opposition party led by former Prime Minister *Khaleda Zia* has launched an extra-parliamentary, nationwide programme of *agitation to* overthrow the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Life in all major *urban centres of* Bangladesh is paralysed by strikes and protests, and many people have been killed and injured. In Sri Lanka, the government of Chandrika Bandaranaike continues to battle with the hardy Tamil separatist guerrillas of the LTTE.

In India, South Asia's oldest and most populous democracy, the year old coalition *government collapsed* last week when the amiable Inder Kumar Gujral tendered his resignation to the *president* who has asked him to continue as caretaker prime minister until a new government is formed or, failing that, fresh elections are scheduled. The failure of Gujral's government to continue in office, and the uneasy prospects for the formation of a new government reflect the problems facing Indian democracy following *the decline of the* Indian National Congress, India's oldest national party which was once led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Under Nehru who died in 1965, the Congress had a virtual monopoly of power, an advantage he used in order to endow India with a democratic and secular character. After him the mantle of Congress leadership fell on his daughter Indira Gandhi — no relation of the Mahatma — who, following a brief interregnum, became India's prime minister.

Indira Gandhi was a *strong leader* but unlike her father she was neither a deeply *committed democrat* nor a charismatic enough leader to *hold together* a diverse and continent-wide political party without manipulating the divisions and rivalries within it. Her style had a demoralising and divisive impact on the party which gradually suffered also from the natural process of erosion. *It* was under her leadership in 1977 that the Congress *lost control* of the federal government for the first time since independence in 1947. The process of decline set in, arousing a host of political ambitions in both national and regional politics. Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 by Sikh *dissidents in revenge for her* ordering the army to dislodge Sikh rebels from the Golden Temple, the most sacred of Sikh shrines. Rajiv Gandhi, her son and successor as prime minister, was assassinated in 1991 allegedly by the LTTE, in revenge for India's military intervention against the Tamil separatists of Sri Lanka.

The two assassinations virtually dissolved the Nehru dynastic glue that was *holding the Congress together. Its* decline was sudden and rapid, with defection playing a role in it. Other parties gained corresponding ground. In the general elections of 1996, the Congress came a poor second after the BJP, a right wing Hindu nationalist formation supported by other more militant, and more or less fascistic Hindu groupings. The BJP formed a government under Prime Minister Atal Vehari Vajpai which won *the distinction* of being the shortest *lived* government in Indian history, as Mr Vajpai failed within the week to muster the required majority in India's parliament, the Lok Sabha. Here, one should note *that the magic number for* forming a government in the 545 member parliament is 272.

Gujral became the prime minister in May 1996, at the head of a thirteen party coalition whose members ranged from the Communist Party-Marxist (CCP-M) to the DMK, an ethnic Tamil party. This was an unlikely coalition of disparate groupings united only by a shared aversion to the BJP and its partners. The only *surprise about the fall of this government* is that it did not happen earlier. "How far could a cat with thirteen tails walk?", was an Indian friend's rhetorical answer. The immediate reason for its collapse is that the Congress, which supported the coalition without joining the government decided to withdraw its support. Its reasons for doing so provide a portrait of sorts of the Indian National Congress today.

The Nehru family, with *Rajiv Gandhi*'s Italian widow at its head, is still the public legitimator of the Congress. The family insists that those responsible for Rajiv's murder be identified and punished. *Hence, the Congress* has been demanding that the government make public the Jain Commission Report on the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. It is widely believed that the Report identifies the DMK, a coalition partner, as being implicated in the murder. Should the Jain Report be made public, DMK would have to leave the coalition, and the fragile government would have fallen. Other coalition partners objected, and *Gujral demurred. As the Congress* indicated the withdrawal of its support from the coalition, Gujral had no choice but to resign.

The truth is more complex. The Congress is factionalised around at least three power brokers. All have chafed at being on the margins of power, and at least one faction has flirted with the idea of coalescing with the BJP to form a government. Hence, defections are *feared unless somehow the Congress* can get into power which was not possible with the current coalition partners. Mr Kesari, the current President of the Congress, had been scouting for sometime for coalition partners. Could he be calculating *that prospects* of power will serve as the magnet to bring partners in and prevent defections? In their meeting with President KR Narayanan on 1 December, Congress leaders assured him *that they can muster* the required majority, and urged that they be invited to form the government. Similar assurances were given to the president by leaders of BJP, the other contender for power. Both obviously expect that once they are invited to form the government, defectors from *other parties will join them. Gujral*, on the other hand, has to hold his United Front partners together, so he argues that the political deadlock can be resolved only if fresh elections are held. In the coming few days the president will have to decide.

There is much resistance among legislators to the idea of more elections. *Elections are an expensive business. If* another is called, it will be India's fourth in three years. *Most politicians would* hate to have to go through it again. Yet, to this observer at least it appears unlikely that either the Congress or the BJP can form a viable government. The current parliamentary arithmetic appears to be against it. BJP is the largest party in the Lok Sabha with 162 members; its allies bring its strength to 193. It needs 79 more members to reach the magic number — 272. It has been wooing a Congress faction. If Sharad Pawar makes the unlikely decision of joining with his followers, the BJP will gain at most 30 more members, and will still need more than forty seats. Moreover, the partners it seeks are not likely to be stable.

The Congress is equally ill-placed to form a government. With 140 members, *it* needs 132 more to command a parliamentary majority. The TMC, an ethnic *Tamil party and Bihar* supporters of jailed provincial leader Lalloo Parasad Yadav may join it with about 20 members each. It will still be short of a majority in parliament by some 90 members. It is hard to imagine where it will find them, and in the event that it does, whether it will be able to hold them together without producing a mob in place *of a cabinet. After all, every coalition* partner wants at least one ministerial position. It seems unlikely then that either of the two self-proclaimed contenders to power can actually deliver a workable government.

President Narayanan is a sensible man, prone to seeking moderate solutions based on consensus. He may try to persuade all or at least most parties to join a "national" government, with a mission to carry on for at least another year before fresh elections are held. Since most parliamentarians are averse to fresh elections, he may well succeed. But again, it seems unlikely. So the prospects are that Indians will soon be going to the polls, perhaps after one of the two major parties — the Congress or BJP — has been allowed a brief (and doubtless unsuccessful) *attempt at governing.* But will more elections help yield greater clarity as Gujral hopes? A realistic look at India's current political map suggests that the next elections will produce, at best, a slightly more durable *shakshouka* than the one he has served up. And at worst? Who knows, in these uncertain South Asian times.

A way out of the greenhouse?

As representatives of 160 UN member states meet in Japan to discuss the future of the planet's climate, Peter Snowdon examines the role played by the developing world in the deadlocked negotiations — and asks whether it may not finally be the South that holds the key to a solution

Ray-Bans for polar bears? Fine wines from Finland? "Global warming" may sound nice, if you live in the North, but as El Nino heats up and the gulf stream cools down, "global chaos" might in fact be nearer to what most of us — and our children's children — will have to live with. The final bill for the last two centuries of industrial "development" is more likely to be counted in crops lost, epidemics propagated and populations displaced — whether by flood or drought — than in the number of bottles of Ambre Solaire shifted by the supermarket chains.

The extent of the potential damage is properly incalculable. Drowned cities and desert storms *are one thing; a new ice age is another.* Yet the atmosphere of the world is now heating up faster than at any time since human life began on earth, 160,000 years ago. As Aubrey Meyer, director of the London-based Global Commons Institute (GCI), one of the leading independent advocacy groups working on climate change, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "The uncertainty at this point is with regard to the under-representation of the dangers we face, rather than the opposite. Things are probably worse than the "scientific consensus" has *allowed* for. *Many positive feedback* mechanisms are simply not represented in the existing *climate* models. We are globally *moving* into political and ecological double-jeopardy at an accelerating rate, with no real sense of how near the thresholds of irreversible change we are."

But what is a boy to do? At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, many of the most powerful boys in the world — the elected leaders of the industrialised nations — signed a commitment to stabilise emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in their countries at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Five years *later it is clear that few, if any*, of those nations will come anywhere near meeting that target. Those that do will achieve this largely as a by-product of other policies — closing down industries that were unprofitable or politically inconvenient — and not through any specific act of political will. At the same time, attempts to advance beyond this initial agreement have been consistently logjammed. After a year of frustration, inaction and continuing "disinformation" (largely funded by the international fossil fuel industry), government delegates now have one last chance to thrash out an agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at their meeting in Kyoto, from 1 to 10 December. If it's hard to be pessimistic — the stakes are far too high for that — it's harder still to be confident of any progress, even at *the level of realpolitik*. So far the horse-trading has been all teeth and no horse.

Until very recently, the proposals on the table were virtually a natural catastrophe in themselves. Following the signing of the Berlin Mandate in 1995, it was agreed that GHG emission quotas would be imposed only on "Annex I" (i.e. industrialised) nations, who had the longest criminal record in this respect, and were thus responsible for most of the damage to date. Backed by a majority of environmental pressure groups, the *Alliance of Small Island States* (AOSIS), many of whose *members* are threatened with economic, if not physical, extinction by rising sea levels, opened the bidding by demanding the Annex I nations make a reduction of 20% by the year 2010. The US, who had promised a "substantial" gesture as recently as *last year, delayed showing their* hand until the very last minute, only to announce on 22 October last that they were prepared to grant themselves (and others) an extension until 2010 of their existing commitment to stabilise emissions at 1990 levels — if the developing nations would do something in return. The EU and Japan each made their own proposals, falling somewhere in between *these two extremes, while* Australia (whose economy is largely dependent on energy *exports) generously proposed that no one should* be obliged to do anything at all.

The result, as December approached, seemed to promise nothing but lost opportunity. One of the most important factors contributing to this deadlock has been the inaction of the developing world. The countries that have most to lose from global warming and its consequences also seemed, until recently, to have least to say on the subject. Their main negotiating vehicle, the G-77 (and China), *was paralysed by conflicts of interest* between oil-producing nations, oil-*consuming nations (chiefly India* and China), and resource-poor countries (especially those of Africa). This situation was only aggravated by the Berlin Mandate, which effectively exempted the developing countries from having to envisage their own responsibilities. Questioning the mandate *was rapidly* established as heresy in the environmental community and for many of the nations of the South. Yet it also soon became apparent that unless *it was questioned*, there would be no agreement at all. This has been crystal clear since the US Senate, acting partly under pressure from the fossil fuels lobby, passed a unanimous resolution refusing to ratify any treaty which did not require some concessions from the developing world.

Recently, however, there have been signs that there might be a way out of the current stalemate. *A number of "dissident" pressure groups, led by* Aubrey Meyer's GCI, and including the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, have been working hard to promote a model based on what the GCI calls the principles of "Contraction and Convergence". The aim of this proposal is to stabilise the quantities of GHGs in the atmosphere over a sufficiently long timescale (say 100 years), by working towards convergence of per capita emissions. Ambitious global reduction targets would be set in the medium term, *but those countries that currently have low* per capita energy consumption would be allowed *to expand their use of fossil fuels for a period of* time, perhaps as far as 2045. This may sound suicidal to died-in-the-wool environmentalists, but it is in fact no more than recognising the inevitable. Not only are the developing economies set to "grow" whatever happens, but excluding those countries from emissions quotas may well only encourage dirty industries to delocalise, aggravating unemployment in the North and pollution in the South, without encouraging endogenous development where it is needed.

By *adopting what GCI calls a "constitutional"* approach, as opposed to the more limited statutory solutions that have dominated the debate so far, this potential pitfall can be turned into an asset. Under the "C & C" scheme, the poor countries (which tend to have large relative populations and low per capita energy consumption) would find themselves with a large surplus of unused emission permits, which the rich countries could then buy from them in order to continue burning oil and coal at near-*to-current rates while they gradually* wean themselves off their fossil fuel addiction. This would effectively transform resource-poor nations at a stroke into the owners of a very valuable commodity. Meyer told the *Weekly*: "Because trading of permits would become possible internationally, the global benefit of *avoided emissions can be achieved by* directing the revenue generated from raising the price of overconsumption in the North into the avoidance of further fossil fuel dependency being structured into the developing economies of the South. In effect, the LDCs would leap-frog the developed countries in the search for a low-energy economy, with substantial enabling funds being raised from international permit trading."

This proposal, at first ignored or *dismissed*, has begun to attract a great deal of attention in recent *months. It offers the Clinton administration* a way to call the Senate's bluff by meeting de*mands for developing world reductions and* a market in tradable permits, while also offering the developing countries not only an incentive to get involved now, but the prospect of substantial advantages in the future if the revenue stream thus created can be wisely invested in energy conversion. The Indian government has long been in favour of per capita convergence, and the model has also been endorsed by the European Parliament and *GLOBE*, an international association of concerned parliamentarians founded by Al *Gore. It was explicitly adopted by the Africa* Group of Nations at the August meeting of the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate. Most recently. — and *most* significantly, perhaps — it was endorsed by China at the closing session of the China Council for International Co-Operation on Environment and Development in October.

Whether the agreement that emerges next week in Kyoto will finally incorporate these proposals remains to be seen. But in their absence, it is hard to see that there can be any kind of *agreement* at all.

'Uncertainty and gloom are in'

Asia-Pacific rim nations met in Canada where the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) hit its first major bump in the road, writes Jooneed Khan from Vancouver

Asia's currency crisis dominated discussions at the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) summit meeting that took place in the Canadian Pacific port of Vancouver. Until this year's gloomy summit, all previous meetings were upbeat. APEC itself hit its first major bump at its 5th Summit in Vancouver last week, after eight years of a seemingly unstoppable drive towards wider and faster trade liberalisation around the Pacific Rim.

United States President Bill Clinton *labelled* the currency and financial crises sweeping East Asia as merely "a few little *glitches in the* road", drawing swift and strong criticism from his partners. The Final Declaration *issued after* two days of talks behind closed doors and well-planned photo-ops, put a *brave face on* endorsing the region's economic strength, calling for united action to battle *the ongoing* financial turmoil, and renewing commitment to more trade *liberalisation — in nine* sectors identified by foreign and trade ministers. It also called for a *successful* conclusion to World Trade Organisation (WTO). negotiations on *financial services* by the agreed deadline of 12 December, 1997.

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, host of the meeting, even announced that Russia, Vietnam and Peru would join APEC in 1998, bringing the total membership to 21. Behind the *façade* however, APEC's unity showed signs of cracking.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia, whose currency, the ringgit, has lost 35 per cent of its value this year as a result of speculation, reminded business leaders of the recent G-15 call for restrictions on currency trading. Relying on market forces to run an economy would do *as much* damage as the discredited central planning policies of communist *governments*, he *said*. "*Surrender your* independence to those who know best and you will *prosper: this* is the *creed* of the market," he said.

"The *turmoil* cannot be waved away by brave talk," said Philippine President Fidel Ramos, *adding* the crisis was not Asia's alone. "We recognise the global dimension of the *problem*, and the need for global, cooperative solutions," he said after the summit.

Thai *Prime* Minister Chuan Leekpai said no nation was immune from the epidemic of financial failure sweeping the region — after Thailand devalued its currency and accepted an emergency bailout package from the IMF last summer. "Confidence and optimism are out, uncertainty and gloom are in", he said, adding that the stock market crash in South Korea "could happen to any other economy in the region".

While South Korea's stock market continued to fall amid panic amongst investors, President Kim Young-Sam looked to a $20-billion bailout package from the IMF and Korea's APEC partners. Japan was expected to bear the brunt of bailing out South Korea, but Japanese officials stressed that Japan is in no position to help since it is embroiled in a financial crisis of its own. The giant Japanese brokerage firm Yamaichi Securities folded under a staggering *$24-billion* debt. *It was* the largest Japanese corporation to collapse since the end of World *War II and came less than* a week *after* Japan's 10th largest bank folded.

Looking for membership in the WTO, China, meanwhile, confidently shrugged off the pessimism gripping its Asian neighbours, saying its 'prudent' economic management would protect it from the turmoil. "The situation in China is excellent," President Jiang Zemin said in a dinner speech.The Hong Kong stock market has been free-falling since the former British colony was handed back to China last summer, but Chinese officials insisted their country was immune from the crisis, thanks to its huge trade surplus, its immense foreign exchange reserves, and the fact that the limited convertibility of its currency acted as a barrier to speculators.

The APEC cracks were accentuated by open speculation in the US media that the US found itself in a uniquely strong position to gain from Asia's loss. "While Asia tiger economies are on their knees, the US and like-minded trading partners have the upper hand. US companies looking for a bargain are in shopper paradise", wrote Microsoft-NBC (*MSNBC*) network on the Web.

"Right now, Washington has a rare opportunity to convince, cajole or coerce its *Asian trading partners to accept its free-trade* agenda. Bailout funds from the IMF come *with strings attached — requirements* that tend to parallel American wishes," added MSNBC. Walden Bello, of the Bangkok-based Focus on the Global South, concurred. The US, which has "sizeable trade deficits with Asian countries, and the IMF, which has organised bailout funds for Indonesia and Thailand, are taking advantage of the currency crisis to press for further liberalisation of South-East Asian economies," Bello said in a paper delivered at the parallel Peoples Summit on APEC.

The highly successful Peoples Summit dealt another telling blow to APEC's seemingly invincible armour. In almost no other APEC country with the exception of Canada, could such a huge international gathering of youth, women, human rights activists, trade union leaders, political opponents and NGOs meet openly to debate child labour, the over-exploitation of women at the bottom of the subcontracting chain, the persecution of trade unionists, the arrest and torture of political opponents, and the extensive violations of human rights in their countries.

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**

Al-Ahram Weekly 4 - 10 December 1997

MPs slam US aid to parliament

An American grant to "support" the People's Assembly and the Shura Council came under heavy parliamentary fire this week, with MPs charging the grant was an "insult" to the Egyptian parliament. Gamal Essam El-Din attended the heated debate

United States foreign aid agreements have become a source of constant contention for members of the People's Assembly elected in December 1995.

The criticism, however, reached a crescendo in the recently reconvened parliament this week when the MPs began debating the second amendment of the Unites States Agency for International Development (USAID) Decision Support Services (DSS) grant. Leftist and other opposition MPs say that the grant represents an insult to the parliament.

This grant, whose total value is $12 million, began with a $2 million grant in 1993 to support legislative and administrative reforms in the People's Assembly and the consultative Upper House, the Shura Council.

The Assembly approved the first amendment of this DSS grant in May 1995, raising it to $4.3 million. The Assembly was scheduled this week to further raise it to almost $8.3 million.

But leftist and Nasserist MPs described the DSS grant as being "directly contemptuous" of parliamentarians.

According to Mohamed El-Doheiri, an MP from the leftist Tagammu Party, USAID has not only given itself the right to impose sanctions on the recipients (the People's Assembly and Shura Council), but also stipulates that it should have access to confidential information about the grant project.

"We, as members of the People's Assembly, are not Iraq — to be treated with such contempt and subjugated to America's conditions in such a humiliating way," El-Doheiri said.

Sameh Ashour, the Nasserist Party's only MP, was more outspoken in criticising the DSS grant.

"It is not only a matter of wording an agreement in a humiliating way, but now we are placed in a position where America is pushing us to adopt certain policies at the expense of the independence of the People's Assembly and Shura Council," he said.

Explaining his view of the way the grant infringes on the legislature's independence, Ashour pointed to the DSS's explanatory note which says that the grant's objective is to help boost economic liberalisation and privatisation policies in Egypt. "To this end, the proceeds of the DSS grant's first stage were primarily spent on 26 leading deputies... in the Assembly's economic, legislative and general committees," said Ashour. He implied that the money was intended to dictate policy to the recipients.

"If the Assembly is required to remain independent from the [executive branch], it should, first and foremost, be required to retain this independence in face of such stark foreign intervention," said Ashour.

The Assembly's speaker, Fathi Sorour, clearly angered by El-Doheiri's and Ashour's charges, explained that the government, not the Assembly, is the recipient of USAID's DSS grant.

"The provisions of this grant agreement are by no means meant to address the Assembly. It is the government that concluded this grant with the objective of helping the Assembly's efforts in improving its information network and providing training to its employees," he said.

"The Assembly's decisions are not tied to any objectives conjured up by the imagination of any person or institution," said Sorour.

Other MPs, such as majority leader Ahmed Abu Zeid, urged deputies "not to deal with foreign grants with such heightened sensitivity, because the terms [of the grant] are really far from infringing upon the sovereignty of the Assembly or the government."

The heated exchange, however, came to an end when Kamal El-Shazli, minister of state for parliamentary affairs, surprised the majority deputies by approving the withdrawal the DSS grant from parliamentary consideration for further revision.

"I agree with deputies who referred to the sanctions contained in this grant agreement," he said.

"But this may be due to some mistakes in translation or to the original text itself. If this grant proved to be adversely affecting the Assembly in any way, the government would not hesitate to reject it," said El-Shazli.

Equally controversial was another USAID grant for technical cooperation and feasibility studies which, opponents claimed, accelerated the privatisation programme to the detriment of the national economy.

The first amendment to the grant was signed in March 1994, raising the grant amount from $10 million to $20 million. The second amendment augmented the grant to $30 million. Although MPs, from the opposition and majority parties alike were equally outspoken in criticising this grant, which was raised by the third amendment to $49.8 million, their criticism was not strong enough to have the grant rejected or withdrawn.

Businessman Khaled Mahmoud, one of four deputies currently facing trial for obtaining hefty banking loans without collateral, charged that disbursement of this grant took effect ahead of approval by the Assembly.

"These kinds of grants, which are aimed at accelerating the privatisation process, usually leave adverse effects on the national economy," said Mahmoud.

"Most of this grant's funds were misappropriated in terms of corrupting a handful of public enterprise officials by paying them hefty salaries, bonuses and incentives," said Mahmoud.

Mahmoud even called for sending officials entrusted with valuing shares of companies slated for privatisation to trial "because they valued these companies at lower-than-real prices although large amounts of the grant money were allocated to valuation studies."

El-Badri Farghali, a veteran leftist MP from Port Said, described the US grants as "the hangman's noose because when America gives us a dollar, it takes in return thousands of dollars from Egypt."

Responding to these criticisms, Zafer El-Bishri, minister of state for planning, explained that the scope of the grant does not include privatisation processes, but is mainly concerned with financing feasibility studies conducted by the state's different sectors and civil cooperative societies.

Another businessman, Salah Shaladim, also complained that large amounts of USAID grants are usually provided to consultancy offices. Nawal El-Tatawy, a former economy minister, argued that consultancy work was very important and dismissed that large amounts of this grant were spent as incentives to a handful of public enterprise officials and consultancy experts.

State Minister El-Shazli concluded the debates by giving a government promise to provide the Assembly with a detailed statement about the disbursement of these types of grants.

Softening the blow

Egypt is doing everything it can to save its tourism industry after 58 tourists were massacred by terrorists. Rehab Saad looks at the government's plans to salvage the country's top foreign currency earner

In a meeting with Japanese businessmen this week, Economy Minister Youssef Boutros Ghali said that the Luxor massacre, in which 58 tourists lost their lives on 17 November, could result in losses estimated at $500 million for Egypt during the current tourist season alone.

At some $3 billion a year, tourism is the country's top foreign currency earner, as well as one of its fastest growing industries.

In an attempt to soften the blow, the government has taken a number of emergency measures, announced this week by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri. Banks will continue to finance the industry, and will postpone payments on all debts owed by it for a three months period, Ganzouri announced. The government measures also provided that all extra fees on floating hotels, restaurants, and entrance visas will be waived.

In a complementary move, EgyptAir, the national carrier, will increase its domestic flights and cut domestic rates by 50 per cent for a three-month period. Additionally, any tariffs exceeding two per cent, charged by local tourism councils, will also be annulled.

The government hopes that these steps will dampen the impact of the attack on an industry which brought in 4.1 million tourists by the end of fiscal year 1996-97.

Fearing that fewer tourists would lead to layoffs in the industry, El-Ganzouri also decreed that no tourism industry employees should be dismissed in the public or private sectors.

"Tourism revenues do not go into the government's treasury, but to the thousands of people working in the tourism sector," said Mamdouh El-Beltagui, the tourism minister, adding that terrorists are not undermining the welfare of the government, but that of the people.

Tourism Ministry statistics reveal that about 150,000 people are employed by hotels, 85,000 in tourist villages, 18,310 in travel agencies, 40,000 in bazaars and 3,985 as tour guides. Thousands of others are employed in related service and support industries such as taxis and restaurants.

Following the Luxor attack, several travel agencies and hotels sought to minimise losses by laying off some employees and closing offices abroad. At Cairo Airport, for example, 23 travel agencies, responding to an alarming number of cancellations, fired many of their employees and cut by half the salaries of scores more.

"We did this to be able to pay the rents for our offices in the airport, as well as cover overhead costs, payments on tourist buses and taxes," said the manager of one of the agencies, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We are facing a real crisis," said Ehab Gaddis, the general manager of Gaddis Hotel in Luxor. "I am trying to tighten up my budget... Unfortunately, I have to start with the hotel workers" because of the other costs that must be paid, including bank debts.

It was not immediately clear whether those dismissed before El-Ganzouri's decision was taken would get their jobs back.

In a move to boost the number of visitors to Upper Egypt this season, the Education Ministry has decided to postpone the mid-year school holiday until after the holy month of Ramadan. It is a decision which Gaddis welcomes, as it will encourage domestic tourism during this period.

However, he said, "this will last for only two weeks, and then everything returns to the way it was."

In addition, domestic tourism means that "the money will be spent by Egyptians and (will go) to Egyptians, so there will be no hard currency and no increase in the national income," he said.

Along with hotels and restaurants, tourism projects were affected by the militant attack.

While about 40 per cent of the country's tourism projects were unaffected, another 40 per cent are either having problems with the banks now, or depend on tourism revenues for financing, said Adel Radi, head of the Tourism Development Authority (TDA). He made no mention of the status of the remaining 20 per cent.

Nabil Abdel-Latif, head of the investors association for the Riviera project, a new tourism project, said that investors met with El-Ganzouri last week to discuss the situation.

"We requested that banks should go on giving loans to investors despite the crisis," he said. "We also requested the postponement of any instalments or bank interest payments until the crisis passes."

"Most of our requests have been met, and this is a good sign that tourism development will continue," he said.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**



Al-Ahram: A *Diwan* of contemporary life

2 1 1

A mounting crime wave in the first decade of the 20th century led the government to devise new penalties for people who proved to be security risks and for repeat offenders in cases where definite evidence was absent. The new law provided for internal exile for the first time in the history of modern Egypt. The Kharga Oases in the Western Desert were designated as the site of exile camps. Exiles were put to work there in workshops and agricultural enterprises. They received daily wages and were allowed to have their families live with them. Dr Yunan Labib Rizk reviews the experiment from reports published by *Al-Ahram*

"The Administrative Exile Commission in Girga convened and began to call out the names of the accused, beginning with the criminals of the district of Tahta. Five names were called out, the first of whom was Mohamed Abu Zeid El-Sayed, known as Abu Zeid El-Hilali. The accused is 36-years-old, light-brown complexioned, of average height and build, and with a black moustache.

"The police commissioner read out the charges against the above-mentioned defendant. The list of charges indicate that the accused is a member of a large and important family. His father was the mayor of the village of Joheina; however, the son began to associate with the criminal element in that village and eventually became one of them and worked his way up to become the head of a large and notorious gang. Abu Zeid had been accused of a number of thefts, most committed with the use of force. He had also been accused of murder and the intent to commit murder. However, he was acquitted of most of these crimes while other charges were suspended due to lack of evidence. The defendant has a criminal record according to which he has been suspected of having committed over 20 crimes.

"Abu Zeid denied all the charges in spite of the testimony of witnesses who offered the clearest proof of his ghastly criminal past and the terror he has inflicted upon the villagers. Yet when he was acquitted of the most recent charge brought against him, he was greeted as a local hero and paraded from the Tahta train station to his village of Joheina where he received delegations of well-wishers and was presented with numerous gifts.

"After hearing all the witnesses for the defence and for the prosecution, and after subsequent deliberations, the court sentenced the defendant to five years parole and the payment of a LE1,000 bond within 15 days during which period he will remain under detention. If the said bond is not paid within the stipulated period, he will be exiled to the area designated for that purpose."

This report on the trial of one of the most notorious gangsters of early 20th century Egypt appeared in *Al-Ahram* on 6 September 1909. It was part of the newspaper's coverage of the trials that followed the promulgation of the "administrative exile law" on 4 July of that year, providing a captivating account of rural law and order during the opening decade of this century.

It was on 24 January 1909 that the Ministry of Interior first moved "to create commissions to prepare lists of those individuals whose continued presence in their areas of residence is deemed to pose a threat to public safety." The reason for the action was cited in the Ministry's statement: "The incidence of crime has risen sharply over this past year and, as the customary procedures that have been followed until the present have not yielded the desired results, it has been decided to adopt harsher measures guaranteed to deter repeated criminal offenders whose presence has come to pose a serious hazard to security in the areas in which they reside." The measures involved "conducting an investigation into all crimes of which these individuals have been accused, even though they have not been brought to trial due to lack of sufficient evidence, and to investigate these individuals' character and style of life. If it is determined that they constitute a threat to public safety in the areas in which they reside, they will be sentenced accordingly to exile or other punishment as deemed appropriate."

One *Al-Ahram* reader, Mustafa Bakri El-Asiouti, contributed an article, offering a rather unique interpretation of the Ministry of Interior's action. "The prisons are so crowded that they have had to set up tents," he wrote. "The reason for this over-crowding is that they built prisons which are more like enormous palaces where inmates can eat decent food, wear clean clothes and sleep in tidy places and even find work, all in accordance with the regiment set for them by the prison warden and physician."

What El-Asiouti overlooked was the fact that notorious gangsters like Abu Zeid El-Hilali often managed to escape this experience. They were expert at exploiting the legal loopholes in order to gain acquittals for the crimes they committed.

It was not long before the new law came into effect. Consisting of 22 articles, it was to apply "to all individuals who have known records for assault, or threatening assault upon the lives and property of others." The commissions charged with conducting the trials of these individuals were to consist of "a district director or governor as chairman, a chief magistrate from the national court system, a public prosecutor and two rural notables."


Illustration: Makram Henein

The commissions would be empowered to pass sentences ranging from "parole for a period of up to five years on the condition of good conduct or with the pledge of a financial bond, as is deemed appropriate by the commission" to "administrative exile." The latter punishment was to be meted out "if the offender is unable to pay the stipulated bond, if the district director or governor issue a decree exiling the offender to an area of Egypt designated by the minister of interior, or if the parolee commits a crime or misdemeanour subject at least to a prison sentence, or in any way violates the conditions of parole."

As for the "area of Egypt designated by the minister of interior" where convicts would be sentenced to "administrative exile," authorities ultimately settled upon the Kharga Oases in the Western Desert. Initially, the commissions rarely resorted to exile, opting to sentence convicts to parole with the payment of bonds ranging from LE300 to LE1000. The following year, however, at least five convicts were condemned to exile in addition to the payment of sizable bonds. As a result, public interest was drawn to this new area of exile and, on 20 August 1910, *Al-Ahram* featured a report on "The exiles and the Kharga Oases."

It must have come as a shock to the newspaper's readers that the exile was not as desolate as they might have imagined. According to the report, Colonel Mohamed Shawkat Bek, the commander in charge at Kharga, "arrived in Cairo to receive the Ministry of Interior's approval for the purchase of winches, water-wheels, irrigation pumps and a number of other items required for life in the exile camp there. Already, 23 wells have been dug in the oases, providing irrigation for approximately 200 feddans."

In addition to irrigation works, convicts were also put to work in brick manufacture and construction. Workshops were also established to teach them straw mat weaving and felt manufacture. Eventually, their agricultural enterprises were very successful. They grew cucumbers, watermelons, okra, radishes and *molukhiyya* (green soup leaves). For their labours, the convicts received between five and eight piastres a day, "and if they have not brought their families with them, they can purchase their daily food supplies for 15 milliemes (1.5 piastres) and save the remainder of their pay."

As this report indicates, convicts were frequently accompanied into exile by their families. According to the report, "there are now 400 exiles in the Kharga Oases in addition to 350 male and female family members who have accompanied them. Up to now there are 160 houses to accommodate them and construction is under way on an additional 160 homes. Each housing unit consists of two rooms and a reception area. There already exists a school for boys which has 30 pupils and a school for girls will soon be built next to it."

Other facilities were provided. For religious edification there was a resident sheikh. The convicts "listen to his sermons twice a day and they also pray the required five times a day." At the same time, the newspaper assured its readers, security was tight. The exile colony was manned by a commander, five officers, 56 foot policemen, 46 mounted policemen, 3 on mules and 43 on camels. Perhaps not so comforting, however, was the final note that "none of the exiles have managed to escape, with the exception of eight and police are currently searching for them."

After the promulgation of the "administrative exile law", *Al-Ahram* was keen to cover the trials. In part, at least, it saw this endeavour as its own contribution to deterring crime. It may have also been in deference to some explicit or implied government instructions.

Al-Ahram appeared equally concerned in its coverage to vest the proceedings with an appropriate reverence.

Al-Ahram's readers must have been shocked by some very disturbing truths revealed by its coverage of the trials. Firstly, they discovered that most of the "individuals with criminal records" who were brought before the commissions enjoyed the protection of rural notables and, indeed, frequently worked for them. Moreover, many of the notables were not only implicated in some of the crimes, but actively participated in carrying them out, leading the commission panel to summon these leading rural figures before it. As *Al-Ahram* remarked, "only very few of the criminals are poor and have no backing." On one occasion it reported that police in Deirut were pursuing a group of criminals who had fled after their gang leader died and that "they hid out in the home of a wealthy man of this area where they were arrested."

The scandal reached its peak when, on 25 May 1910, under the headline, "Whoever would have believed it?" *Al-Ahram* listed the names of a number of prominent rural notables who had been brought before the commission and commented, "Most, if not all, of the criminal incidents take place at the command of individuals you would describe as notables, while the actual perpetrators are no more than their mute instruments."

Additionally, readers discovered that in some instances crime was a family business. Ibrahim El-Sayed Nagi from Shandawil "is a notorious malicious felon as was his father and grandfather before him." Hassan Khalil Abu Leila from Banawit "is an infamous criminal and his father before him struck fear throughout the countryside." Ahmed Harfoush was from a family "all members of which are dastardly criminals who have been sentenced to hard labour." Moreover, many criminals had particular lines of specialisation. One defendant from Beheira "turned out the lights of the semaphore at Tawfiqiya station, stopped the train so that he and the members of his gang could board it and rob its cargo." One horrifying criminal was Hassanein Hassanein Ahmed from Assiut who "waits until a husband leaves his home in order to break into the house and assault and rape women at knife-point." The correspondent covering the trial of this criminal added, "All present during these proceedings expressed their profound amazement and sorrow that there could even exist such a manner of human being who could commit such treachery against his fellow man and so tarnish the name of this village."

According to *Al-Ahram*'s figures, the work of the "administrative exile commissions" was successful, for the rate of crime dropped considerably over the following years. One is tempted to wonder what effect such commissions might have on the rising crime rates of today.

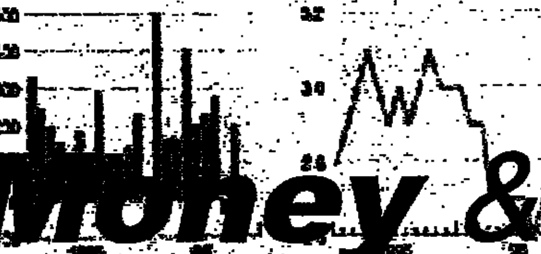


The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

35 new companies established

THE COMPANIES Committee of the Ministry of Economy has approved the establishment of 35 companies, with total authorised capitals of LE667 million. Of these companies, 34 have a combined share capital of LE161 million, and LE173.391 million in issued capital. The new companies will operate in a variety of fields, ranging from trade, tourism and real estate to industry, services and contracting.

Ahmed Fouad Atta, head of the Committee, stated that agreements have been made with German and Thai companies in Egypt to carry out surveys of the Egyptian market.



Foodstuff quality seminar held

DR YOUSSEF Wali, minister of agriculture and land reclamation, opened a conference in Alexandria this week on the role of quality control in the foodstuffs industries. Participating in the conference were a number of delegates from Arab and Western countries.

Eng. Mohamed Ahmed Selim, secretary-general of the conference, said that one of the topics presented for discussion was the use of modern technology in the foodstuffs industry in light of the GATT with regards to quality control.

Reserve your space now at the premiere computer fair in Egypt, ACITEX

THE CHANCE to be included is still available; starting from today for one week you can still rent exhibition space in the Sixth Ahram Computer and Information Technology Exhibition (ACITEX), scheduled from 18-21 February 1998 in Cairo. It is worth mentioning that ACITEX will be held concurrently with the Sixth International Artificial Intelligence Conference.

Responding to companies' increased demand to rent exhibition space at ACITEX, one of the most successful exhibitions in the field, organisers have opened a limited number of exhibition areas for rent. In coordination with the Cairo International Conference Centre, limited exhibition space will be added to the main exhibition hall in a suitable way that will not block visitors' paths nor the exhibitors themselves.

It is noteworthy that state- of-the-art methods have been taken into consideration and are being employed in organising the exhibition. ACITEX will be held simultanously with the Sixth International Artificial Intelligence Conference, organised by the Egyptian Computer Association in cooperation with the National Information Committee of the Scientific Research Academy, and the Faculty of Computer Science at Helwan University and the American University in Cairo.

A great number of foreign professors and Egyptian professors residing abroad will attend the exhibition and the conference. Nearly 70 research papers will be presented during the sessions, which will take place at the Press Centre of the Cairo International Conference Centre.

Seminars will also be organised by exhibiting companies interested in presenting and demonstrating their products and services before the public.

Foreign exhibitions will also have a strong showing at the exhibition, including SYSTEMS from Munich, specialised in telecommunications, and CeBIT in Hannover, specialised in computer and information technology. Such foreign exhibitions help put ACITEX on the international map, while demonstating the Egyptian determination to continue marching in support of the computer and information technology movement.

To reserve exhibition space, please call 3391071, or fax 3941866.


The Cairo International Conference Centre

Technical institute to be established

THE MOHAMED Rageb Organisation for Social Development, a non-profit organisation registered with the Ministry for Social Affairs, is establishing a vocational institute, the Alexandria Higher Technical Institute, to train students in different fields of electronics, including computers, data technology, telecommunications and electro-mechanical technology.

Future training programmes will include management and marketing.

The aim of the institute is to award BSc degrees in technological engineering and its branches. The institute accepts applicants with a *thanawiyya 'amma* in science or maths, or equivalents. The institute was established by decree 1103 for 24/9/1997 of the Ministry of Education. Dr. Mohamed Shabana, a professor of electronics at the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Alexandria and Beirut Arab University, has been appointed dean of the institute, while leading professors of engineering have been selected to teach.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Netanyahu's jokes

Perhaps it was jet lag. But when Eitan Ben-Tsur, the director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry arrived in Cairo earlier this week, he was optimistic that the recent Israeli cabinet meeting had yielded results that would lead to a breakthrough in the peace process in one week.

Netanyahu and the rest of the cabinet had approved a plan for a conditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the West Bank. Although no specific time was set for the troop re-deployment, the condition was the same as it has been for the last year or so — a Palestinian Authority crackdown on militants.

The Palestinians rejected the offer — understandably — viewing it as a ploy to keep more territory under Israeli control. They were right.

No sooner had the Israeli cabinet's plan been signed, than Netanyahu's government approved the construction of 900 new homes in the West Bank. These are, of course, the "legal" settlements. Tens of thousands of other settlements are currently being built under a smoke screen "expansion" policy to accommodate Israel's "natural growth".

The aim of this policy, by Israel's own admission, is to make annexing parts of the West Bank easier should the Palestinians decide to unilaterally declare statehood.

Still, Ben-Tsur believed that he had something new, perhaps even revolutionary, to tell Foreign Minister Amr Moussa.

Egypt, like the Palestinians, viewed the offer with a mixture of concerned amusement and disapproval.

It is hard to imagine that Netanyahu and the Israeli cabinet believed that anyone would fall for such a play. Netanyahu, unfortunately, seems to suffer from an incorrectable blindness when it comes to politics. While he says that Israel is committed to peace, he turns right around and tells Israelis that they are watching Israel being built (in the settlements).

So what is there left to negotiate on — the cease-fire once this crisis escalates to the level of armed confrontation?

Al-Ahram Weekly

Chairman of the Board........................ **Ibrahim Nafie**
Editor-in-Chief........................ **Hosny Guindy**
Managing Editor........................ **Hani Shukrallah**
Assistant Editor........................ **Wadie Kirolos**
Assistant Editor........................ **Mona Anis**
Layout Editor........................ **Samir Sobhi**
General Manager for Advertising......... **Hassan Hamdi**

Al-Ahram Offices

Main office
AL-AHRAM, Al-Galaa St. Cairo.
Telephones: 5786100/5786200/5786300/5786400/5786500. Direct: 5786064
Telex: 20185/93346 Fax:5786089 /5786833
E-mail: weekly@ahram.org.eg

Overseas offices

USA
Washington DC: Atef El-Ghamri, Al-Ahram Office, Suite 1258, 529 National Press Bldg, Washington DC 20045; Tel: (202)-737-2121/2122.
New York: Atef El-Ghamri, Al-Ahram Office, 39th Fl., Chrysler Bldg., 405 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10174-0300; Tel: (212)972 6440; Telex: 497 9426 ITT U.I.; Fax: (212) 286 0285.
Los Angeles: Soraya Aboul Seoud, 600 S. Curson Ave., 402 LA, CA 90036, USA; Tel: (213)-857-0941; Fax: (213)-857-7084.

Russia
Moscow: Abdel-Malek Khalil, Ahram Office, Kutuzovski Pro Dom 7/4 Kv. 50, Moscow; Tel: 243 4014/ 243 1424; Fax: 230 2879

Canada
Montreal: Mustafa Samy Sadek, Al-Ahram Office, 800 Rene-Levesque Blvd, West Suite 2440, Montreal H3B IX9, Quebec; Tel: (514)876 7825 Fax: (514) 876 9262/ (514)876 7825.

United Kingdom
London: Amr Abdel-Samie, Al-Ahram Office, 203 - 209 North Gower street London NW1 2NJ
Tel: 0171 388 1155, Fax: 0171 388 3130

France
Paris: Sherif El-Shoubashy, Bureau Al-Ahram 26, Rue Marbeuf, 75008 Paris; Tel: (1) 537 72700; Al-Ahram F.; Fax: (1) 428-93963.

Germany
Frankfurt: Mohamed Eissa El-Sharkawi, Al-Ahram Bureau Friedrichstr. 15, 60323 Frankfurt. Tel: (069) 9714380/ (069) 9714381 Fax: (069) 729571.

Austria
Vienna: Mustafa Abdalla, 2331 Vosendorf Orts Str. 253; Tel: 692965/ 694805; Telex: 13 2726 GIGI A; Telefax: 694805.

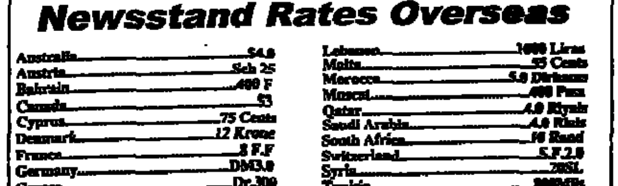
Greece
Athens: Abdel-Azim Darwish, 69 Solonos St., Third floor, Kolonaki 106-79, Athens, Greece. Tel. and Fax :3634503.

Japan
Tokyo: Mohamed El-Dessouki, Duke Aoyama 4-11, Higashi 4 - Chome Shibuya - Ku, Room 402, Tokyo; Tel: (03) 340 63944; Fax: (03) 340 6625

Italy
Mustafa Abdallah [S.A.B. 2000] 00191 ROMA-V. Guido Bant, 34. Tel: 3332250 Fax: 3332294

Brazil
Rio de Janeiro: Ahmed Shedid, Cx. Postal 2395, CEP. 20001.

South Africa
Johannesburg: Mohamed Sabreen, Oxford Manor, 196 Oxford road-Northland 2116, Johannesburg. Tel.and Fax: (011)4477425.



Newsstand Rates Overseas

Australia	$4.0	Lebanon	1000 Liras
Austria	Sch 25	Malta	55 Cents
Bahrain	400 F	Morocco	5.0 Dirhams
Canada	$3	Muscat	400 Pass
Cyprus	75 Cents	Qatar	4.0 Riyals
Denmark	12 Krone	Saudi Arabia	4.0 Rials
France	8 F.F	South Africa	10 Rand
Germany	DM3.0	Switzerland	S.F.2.0
Greece	Dr.300	Syria	20SL
Holland	F12.50	Tunisia	800Mils
Hungary	40 Cents	Turkey	TL120000
Italy	L2000	UAE	4 Dirhams
Jerusalem	50 Cents	United Kingdom	75 Pence
Jordan	400 Fils	United States	$1.5
Kuwait	400 Fils	West Bank	50 Cents
		Yemen	10 Riyals





Battling on many fronts

Ibrahim Nafie outlines the actions necessary to ensure that the terrorist attack in Luxor does not sour the national economy

After the disaster of the terrorist attack in Luxor, and its repercussions on the tourist industry, one question was asked more persistently than any other: How should we proceed to promote confidence in our economy and security?

It is certain that this attack was intended to undermine not just tourism but also international confidence in the Egyptian economy. Foreign investments in Egypt, and possibly local investments too, will undoubtedly be affected by the attack.

Terrorism is the plague of many nations. Yet it remains important that in the international arena those countries afflicted by this plague should be seen to be addressing the problem with the necessary seriousness. Regardless of information campaigns and diplomatic moves to restrict the ability of terrorists to operate from overseas, the most efficient course of action to restore international confidence in Egypt is to pursue the development of the domestic economy with, if anything, even greater vigour. Unless we pursue this course, the terrorists will have succeeded in paralysing the national economy.

Ironically, Egypt's recent positive economic indicators were one of the reasons behind the attack. The terrorists were horrified by Egypt's sustained growth and resolved to do everything in their power to prevent economic recovery.

Yet the fact remains that the deficit in the state budget has dropped, foreign currency reserves have soared, and the inflation rate now stands at between 4 and 5 per cent.

It would be a grave error now if we directed our efforts exclusively to reviving tourism. What is required is to maintain, and even speed up, the momentum of our movement in the direction of economic reform. The economic growth rate now, which averages five per cent annually and which is expected to reach 6.9 per cent in 2002, appears to me extremely modest, lacking in ambition and not on a par with our resources and the challenges we face, including terrorism.

The terrorist attack in Luxor should not make us lose sight of the strategic objectives we set for ourselves in the past years. And no external or internal force, no matter how vicious its intentions, should be allowed to undermine Egypt's economic ambitions.

When a society achieves a growth rate of 10 per cent, such growth becomes self-sustaining, and is unlikely to be derailed by such forces. The front line the long battle against terrorism will be, therefore, in the economic sphere, conceding, of course, the need for urgent action in the security, political and information spheres.

In order to make the necessary leap in economic growth we must honestly address the reasons for the modesty of our economic aspirations. In this connection, I believe that the major obstacle obstructing our progress is the slow and expansive administrative system, which is incapable of efficiently promoting growth.

It is surprising that although we are capable of launching mega projects, whether in infrastructure or land reclamation in the Sinai and the southern valley, the administrative system cannot use these projects as a spring board for an economic and a social upsurge. As a result, we have a surplus of electric power, a surplus of airport and harbour capabilities and large amounts of local and foreign money, accumulating in banks. Turning all this into projects, commodities and services proceeds at a much slower pace than should really be the case. Development strategies should be reconsidered. Launching mega projects, in the hope that they will act as the economic locomotive that gets the rest of the economy moving is no longer an adequate approach.

Revolutionising the state's administrative system, as President Mubarak declared in his speech to the People's Assembly and Shura Council, has become imperative. The negligence of duty and security lapses in Luxor have counterparts in other government departments the effects of which we all feel, not only in terms of the commodities and services extended by the state, but also in terms of obstructing the growth of the private sector. And the latter remains content with modest expansion and even more modest technological advances, as it focuses on the domestic market and demands protection. But while conceding that protection is important in the short term, we must also realise that it is not a long term possibility, and cannot be sustained in the face of our partnership agreements with Europe and also our commitments as signatories of GATT.

What is needed, in short, is nothing less than a revolution in the administrative system, the public business sector and the private sector. And with the right changes in each of these sectors, nothing should be able to come between the Egyptian people and their economic aspirations.

A more hands-on role for Europe

With the peace process faltering and radicalisation growing throughout the Middle East, **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** argues that there is a more hands-on role for Europe

I was recently invited to a seminar in Athens on "Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation: problems and prospects". Because of previous commitments, I was unable to attend; instead, I sent a paper with a few ideas I believe relevant in the light of recent critical development throughout the region. This is a summary of my presentation:

1. The recent showdown between Iraq and the United States over UNSCOM inspections of arms sites in Iraq has brought about a subtle shift in the dynamics of the political game as it has been played in the Middle East since the second Gulf War. Following he invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the US has been calling all the shots in the Middle East. But Baghdad's recent rebellion brought an end to this monopoly, as the crisis was defused thanks to an initiative from Moscow, not from Washington. The US is trying to appear as though it still has the final word, even resorting to gunboat diplomacy to drive the point home. But Washington cannot deny that Moscow's intervention was instrumental in overcoming the crisis. And it is expected that when the dust settles the focus will be on how to remove — or relax — the sanctions (provided Baghdad complies with Security Council resolutions) rather than on compelling the Iraqi regime to comply with Washington's wishes. It can therefore be said that the game in the Middle East is no longer a unipolar one with the US as the unique pole, but is gradually becoming multipolar, thus introducing a new rationale.

2. In the Security Council, France and China support the Russian, rather than the American position. In general, Mediterranean countries believe the Iraqi problem must be addressed more in terms of alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people than of giving precedence to unfinished business with the Iraqi regime. Now that Washington has proved incapable of resolving critical Middle East crises on its own, Europe must step in vigorously. The Euro-Mediterranean space is vital in this respect.

3. The Arab-Israeli peace process has reached an unprecedented low. The boycott of the Doha economic conference by major Arab states, including the moderates among them that are friendly to Washington, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco, betrays a serious credibility crisis. The series of Middle East economic conferences with Israeli participation, first initiated in Casablanca, then followed on an annual basis in Amman, Cairo and now Doha, are seen as part and parcel of the Madrid peace process and cannot be envisaged independently from progress on the key 'land-for-peace' tradeoff. But although the peace process is now totally stalled on all tracks, including the key Israeli-Palestinian track, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright insisted that the Doha conference be held on schedule. To compel parties to send high-powered delegations, she decided to attend the conference herself. As it turned out, she was the highest ranking personality at the conference! The Doha fiasco is yet another indication of Washington's inability to steer the course of events in the Middle East.

4. The failure of the Doha conference must not be allowed to spill over into the Arab world's economic relations with other economic groupings, most notably the European Union. With Euro-Mediterranean cooperation becoming more pertinent than ever, Greece is ideally placed to promote trans-Mediterranean relations. It is important in this respect not to make Euro-Arab relations a function of progress in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Improving relations between the Arab world and Europe across the Mediterranean basin should become an objective in its own right, regardless of developments in the peace process. This argument should be taken even further. It is only when Europe displays a serious intention to develop its relations with the Arab world outside the scope of the peace process, that is, without regard to the rate at which the Arabs 'normalise' relations with Israel, that politicians like Netanyahu will think twice before sabotaging progress in the peace process.

5. With Washington's inability to ensure progress in the peace process through its exclusive sponsorship, it is worth reassessing the European role in this field. So far, the European Union has chosen to remain on the sidelines, whether because it is not yet an integrated sovereign entity while the United States of America is, or because Israel insists on American, not European sponsorship. Since his appointment as European envoy to the peace process, Miguel Moratinos has been careful not to antagonize any party and has kept a low profile, announcing that his role was to complement that of the US, not to compete with it.

But I think Europe has a more specific role to play, not least because the persecution of Jews in Europe was a key factor in the creation of the state of Israel and hence in the onset of the Middle East crisis. Europe could set itself the task, for example, of inducing each of the two sides to acknowledge the suffering of the other — the Arabs by recognising the sufferings of the Jews in history, particularly in Europe during the first half of this century; the Israelis by acknowledging the sufferings of the Palestinians and understanding their plight and grievances. In other words, to get each side to perceive the other as a subject, not an object, of history.

But how to expect the Arabs to do this when the Europeans themselves have not done enough in this field? Have the Europeans convinced the Jews that there will never be another Holocaust? Until they do, Israel will remain locked in a siege mentality, a haven for all Jews that will never become a 'normal' state, with the result that Palestinians will continue to be deprived of their normal, human and national, rights. This is a key cultural and ethical field that only Europeans can help solve. The European Union as a whole assumes historical responsibility in this field.

6. When it comes to bilateral relations between Greece and Egypt, I will not have much to add to what others will be saying on Cyprus. But one specific field of mutual security is vis-à-vis the present military cooperation and strategic alliance between Israel and Turkey, rightly apprehended by both our countries. This must not be envisaged exclusively as of Egyptian-Greek interest, but has implications for the entire eastern Mediterranean.

More generally, with the failures and weaknesses of American diplomacy, the Barcelona process must be solidly boosted. Otherwise, confrontation across the Mediterranean will acquire the features of Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' theory, that is, a clash between the Judeo-Christian and the Islamic worlds. A forerunner of that threat has appeared not only in Algeria, but even in the recent Luxor massacre in Egypt.

No celebrations

By Naguib Mahfouz

This year, I will not celebrate my 86th birthday. One reason is that neither my family nor any of the members of my generation are accustomed to celebrating birthdays, and I have dissuaded my friends from planning any festivities this year. It is not the time for celebrations; they would only be in bad taste. I should thank all those who have considered this possibility; but my decision is final. I will not celebrate until this country has been cleansed of evil.

Overcoming the shock and trauma of the massacre in Luxor at the personal level requires that each of us work it out alone. Transcending the horror requires will-power and long introspection. At the national level, we must work harder, step up production, and, once the security gaps are tightly closed, launch a massive effort to boost development, particularly in Upper Egypt. This effort must produce an impact many times greater than the ripples created, that bloody Monday morning, in the courtyard of the Hatshepsut Temple. Poverty and unemployment, both of which are widespread in Upper Egypt, are the breeding ground for terrorism.

Why have we not given adequate attention to this part of our country? We should multiply incentives for development projects targeting Upper Egypt. Given that up to 10 years in tax holidays are granted investors, incentives for projects in Upper Egypt or impoverished rural areas should be greater, for example 20 years. May this sad experience be an impetus for us to pour our efforts into Upper Egypt, and seek to put things in order for its population.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week — Luxor lessons

Al-Mussawar: "I realise that there are those who believe that the required cure for the present situation is more than a security confrontation; that what is required is a heightened awareness among the political parties and the men of religion, saving youth from unemployment, pressing ahead with development programmes in Upper Egypt and conducting a cultural revolution which would undermine the thinking of the fundamentalist groups. What I would like to emphasise, however, is that the urgent objective of the terrorist groups is to prevent Egypt from achieving these goals and to wreck everything accomplished so far by the people. This is why we must concentrate our efforts to prevent a mercenary minority from ruining the future of a nation which has chosen the right path."
(Makram Mohamed Ahmed, 28 November)

Al-Wafd: "If the Deir El-Bahari massacre has sent our heads spinning, it has also alerted us to the shortcomings of our security. But we would be deluding ourselves if we imagined that our shortcomings were limited to matters of security. What is far more serious is the lopsided political system which has led one political party, identifying itself with the president of the republic, to monopolise politics and stultify the movement of the Egyptian people, in all their political parties, syndicates and groups. The first step on the road to rectifying the situation must be for the president to withdraw from political party leadership, thus allowing the legitimate political parties to compete freely for the confidence of the people — this is what happens in the more advanced democratic nations. In this way we will be pulling the carpet from under the feet of the terrorist groups and all those who oppose democracy."
(Gamal Badawi, 29 November)

Akhbar El-Yom: "There is a school of thought which says that the Luxor massacre was a foreign conspiracy to punish Egypt for its recent political stances. While this is not to be dismissed outright, it aggrandises Israel to an extent far greater than its true size. In the past, we have given greater credit to Israel than it deserves, through our own gross mistakes, and this must stop. To take one example, Hatshepsut Temple was devoid of a security presence and anyone could have carried out the crime without recourse to prior or foreign planning. And if Israel was behind the crime, where were our security forces? The investigations which have been carried out into security shortcomings make it the same whether agents, terrorists or thugs perpetrated the crime. Why do we not admit our gross mistakes? Why do we always inflate Israel to a size greater than it is? Is it to cover up the grossness of our errors?"
(Ahmed Ragab, 29 November)

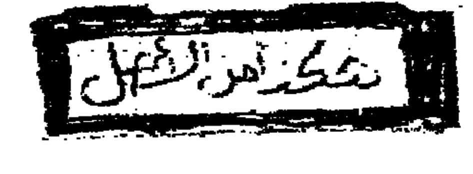
Al-Arabi: "We now have a situation where the will of the people is unified in a unique manner over terrorism and we can do one of two things: either let the opportunity go, as we always do, or to sieze the opportunity to bring about real reform. This would require a dialogue between all national political forces, free elections and a new People's Assembly, a vigorous government and a comprehensive political vision of building the Egypt we would like to see materialise, an Egypt capable of dealing with both internal and external challenges. Let us hope that we shall not let the opportunity slip away. If we lose all the tourist revenue but gain national unity and start down the path of true reform, we will be the winners."
(Galal Aref, 1 December)

Al-Ahram: "Those who accuse Mossad of the Luxor massacre are indirectly defending the terrorist groups by trying to exonerate Islam from such a crime. This view prevents us from taking serious action against the terrorist groups who hide behind religion. Our main aim is to prove that the Luxor crime was not the work of Mossad and that responsibility lies with the terrorist groups. Israel definitely stands to gain if tourism in Egypt is hit, but Israel usually stands to gain from any catastrophe hitting the Arabs and the Muslims, who are normally capable of inflicting disasters upon themselves without any outside help."
(Abdel-Azim Hammad, 1 December)

Compiled by **Hala Saqr**



If Sudan was a painter, then Dr John Garang would be her magnum opus. His eyes are exceptionally expressive. I decided to insert a third eye in his irregularly-shaped face, both because his almond eyes are overwhelming, and to give an idea of the pace at which his pupils move. The whorl on his forehead is not due to the friction of the prayer mat, but to the energy generated by deep thought. The beard, too, is the reflection of a hard life on the battlefield, rather than an offshoot of extreme piety. His finger, raised as if to admonish his listeners, or draw their attention to an extremely important point, marks his vow to bring down the Islamist regime in Khartoum.





Close up

Salama A. Salama

Bring out the old

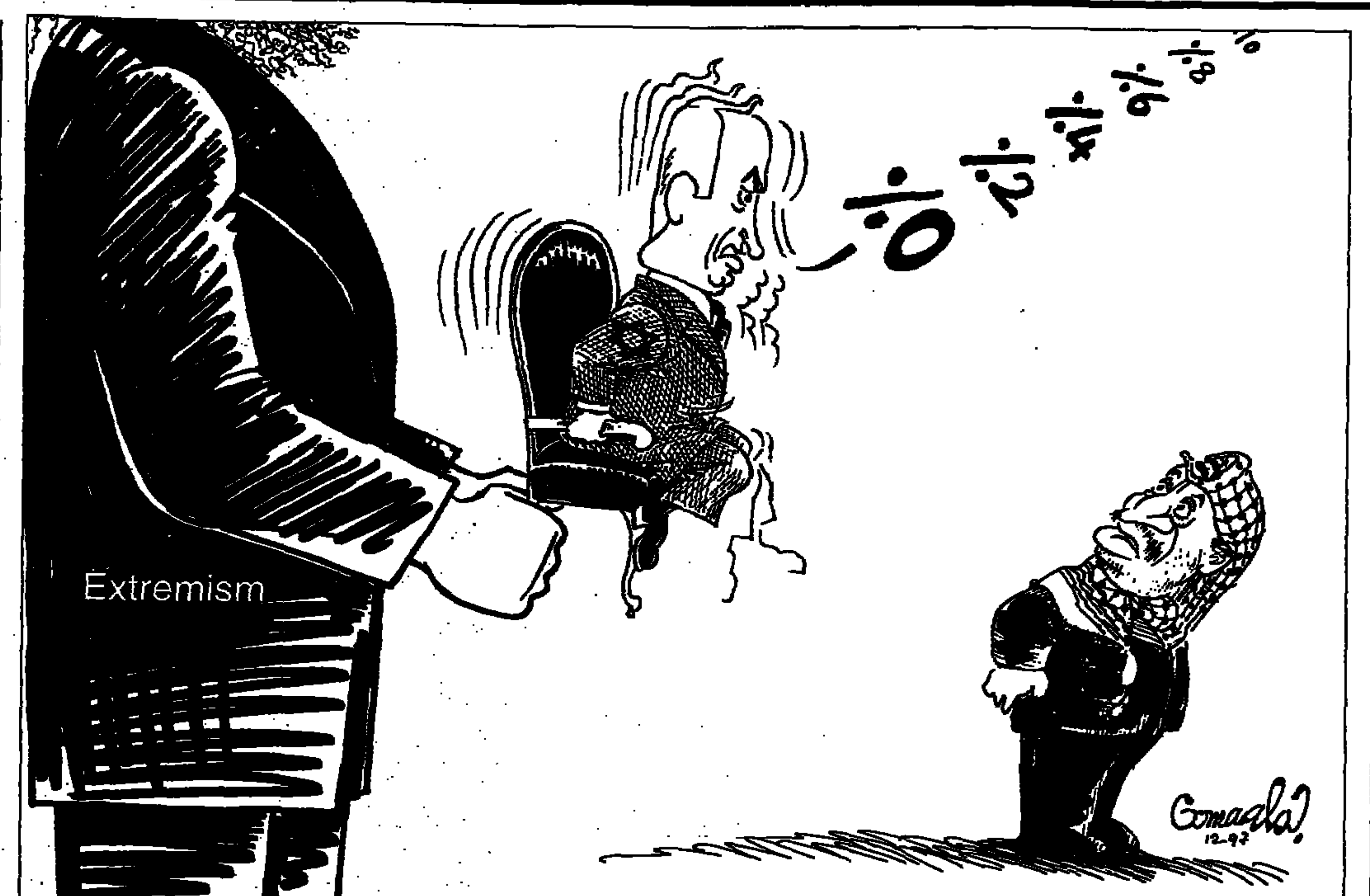
Since the peace process in the Middle East began to crumble in the wake of the Likud victory, the region has become a test tube for diplomats and politicians. Visits to the region are the order of the day. Hardly a week passes without a high-ranking European official's visit. The dignitaries who range from state ministers and foreign ministers to heads of state, stop over in Cairo, Amman and Tel Aviv, then cross over to Gaza to meet with the chairman of the Palestinian Authority. At times, they have enough time and energy to visit Damascus and Saudi Arabia as well.

Yet the political and diplomatic outcome of this flurry of activity has been a reiteration of the obvious: Israel is no longer committed to Oslo or other agreements, and Netanyahu's government is reneging on its responsibilities. These statements are punctuated by warnings that the peace negotiations must be resumed in a way consistent with international law and the land-for-peace principle. All the European officials who have visited the region — whether their countries have a history of active involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, or have little influence on the course of events — have confirmed what everybody knows.

Members of the European Union, whose countries bear a considerable part of the economic burden of the peace agreements, cannot but seize every opportunity to take stances or express views (which, however, must comply with US positions and Israeli intransigence). They are aware that the collapse of the peace endeavours and the renewal of armed conflict between Israel and the Arabs would harm European interests in the region. Europe's repeated attempts to work with the US on resolving the crisis have met only violent resistance and Israel's categorical rejection. If Europe is unable to exert pressure on Israel, the US is reluctant to do so and Russia is playing it safe, therefore, where are the international guarantees set down during the Madrid Conference? The glamour of this early phase has long since grown tarnished and tawdry.

While verbal support is heaped on the Palestinians, and ecstasy fills Arab leaders every time a statement or communiqué is issued by some European official, however, agreements are still concluded with Israel for closer economic, political or military cooperation. Right after Netanyahu announced his emasculated proposal for conditional, restricted withdrawal from the West Bank, not specifying the extent of the withdrawal or any timetable, preparations to conclude a partnership agreement and to establish a free-trade area with Israel, second only to that with the US, were already underway in Europe.

While Europe has virtually no means of bringing pressure to bear on Israel, except in the domain of economic cooperation, EU countries have so far refrained from exercising any economic leverage. In contrast, Europe has been prompt to exercise economic pressure on Iran, Iraq and Libya. EU reactions, therefore, come as no surprise: they are limited to comments, condemnation, censure or encouragement. Meanwhile, no effective initiative is taken on the ground. Words make no difference in the course of events in the region. The Arabs must take this into account.



Soapbox

Egypt is no Algeria

The wave of violence of the last two decades continues to puzzle most writers and analysts. Some commentators resort to incorrect analogies and oversimplified explanations that only increase confusion. This makes the endeavour to tackle the wave of violence more difficult. One example of incorrect analysis is the belief, prevalent in the West, that the activities of "Islamic extremists" in Egypt will eventually lead to another Algeria, a civil war between the government and the terrorists.

This superficial analogy does not hold. Several basic facts separate Egypt from Algeria. First, the Algerian crisis resulted from a political clash between the government and a well-organised political party that won the majority of votes in free elections, held and supervised by the government itself. In Algeria, those who voted for the Islamic party were expressing their dissatisfaction with the government rather than siding with the FIS.

Second, the vast majority of Egyptians who call for Islamisation of society and strict adherence to Islamic law do not engage in any violent acts. They are peaceful, moderate people.

Third, Egyptians of every affiliation agree that the challenges facing Egypt require internal peace and stability and that, regardless of its shortcomings, the regime is genuinely patriotic and basically responsive to the needs of the masses.

Pluralism, diversity of opinion, and uninterrupted dialogue continue to play an alleviating and even a preventive role, immunising Egypt against any possible attack by the Algerian virus.



This week's Soapbox speaker is a writer on Islamic and Arab affairs and a former government minister.

Kamal Abul-Magd

Ibn Khaldun's legacy

The true contributors to human civilisation have been ignored for too long. **Anouar Abdel-Malek** proposes a remedy

Time is a traitor. What we assume to be a bedrock of certainty evaporates into mist.

The new world order, which, in 1991, I termed the new international criminal order — although some accused me of exaggeration — has begun to reveal its true face. With every passing day, this order is growing increasingly relentless and strident, as more and more events indicate that unipolar globalisation, centring around its American-Zionist axis, has entered a critical phase, maliciously opposing any party that challenges it or even attempts to restore an element of moderation.

Against this strained background, President Hosni Mubarak, in the name of the Egyptian people, stood before Parliament on 15 November and declared, "Our goal is to build the Egypt of the future. The future is our first priority. Egypt is equipped to make a significant cultural transition." Underscoring the spirit that would guide this transition, he added, "We must seize every opportunity for progress as we live in an age dominated by the force of economics, the power of science and the hegemony of great (political-economic) entities."

In other words, Egypt's future depends upon challenging the momentous historical movement that is currently determining the features of the world to come. In spite of many hardships and setbacks, Egypt has begun to summon the spirit which emanates from the "genius of place", and to resume its historical place.

But the centre of global power cannot tolerate this. The Egyptian will must be crushed. Egypt challenged the centre of hegemony by condemning its policy of aggression against Iraq. Egypt rallied opposition to economic and political dependency and thwarted the Doha summit. It reaffirmed its determination to play an active role in formulating the new world during recent official visits to Russia and southeast Asia. No wonder, then, that Egypt has become a target.

It was easy to exploit breaches in national security and latent animosities. The massacre in Luxor, at the foot of the greatest symbols of ancient Egyptian glory, are sufficient proof. Salah El-Din Hafez has spoken of "the Zionist missionary campaign of provocation in the US, backed by Israel, which paved the way for the US Foreign Affairs Committee report alleging that Christian minorities are persecuted in Arab and Islamic countries." This campaign, in turn, engendered the climate that fosters extremism.

Against this grim background, we must concentrate on reaffirming ethical, spiritual, societal and political values that, alone, can generate the basis for the mobilisation of the vast majority of peoples and nations toward a re-awakening of Eastern civilisation in order to counteract oppressive hegemony and pervasive nihilism. As a symbol of this goal, I propose the establishment of an international Ibn Khaldun award for the future of human civilisation.

This honour could be bestowed upon individuals engaged in pioneering activities and ideas that contribute to the process of formulating a new world. They must contribute towards the creation of a world capable of rejecting the nihilism, racism, trite commercialism and terrorism that characterise the deep-rooted contempt of the American-Zionist hegemonic entity for the peoples and cultures of the world.

Although many international awards already exist, such as the Nobel prize, which allegedly rewards new inventions and discoveries, reality is not so straightforward as one might believe. Various regional prizes also focus specifically on advances in science and technology. The Ibn Khaldun award, however, would be of a different order — something entirely new. It would be international in the true meaning of the word, not based on regional affiliation or specific disciplines. The Ibn Khaldun award would promote all new and original endeavours contributing to a new enterprise in human civilisation, one that transcends the aggressive, supremacist values of the current order. This prize will emanate from the peoples, cultures and nations of the rising East, which have long been deliberately disregarded in accordance with the prevalent "rationale of monopolisation."

The Ibn Khaldun prize will make it possible to promote the contributions of all nations of the contemporary East, without exception, to human culture in general. As such, it will serve as a means to effect a qualitative transfer in the centre of historical gravity toward the East, and thus to reactivate the spirit of initiative among the diverse peoples, cultures and nationalities around the world.

Why does the world need a new international prize? After all, many Eastern scientists and writers have been Nobel laureates. The list of Nobel laureates since the award's inception, however, reveals that over 60 per cent were from the US alone. In addition, one realises that most of these prizes were awarded in fields which could contribute to the consolidation of Western economic and political supremacy.

What about those who have been instrumental in formulating contemporary world civilisation? Where is the great French poet and critic Louis Aragon honoured? Who has paid tribute to the "Star of the East", Umm Kalthoum; the Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa; General Giap, who liberated Vietnam from two colonialist wars and brought peace to southeast Asia; or Furtado, the great Brazilian development economist? How can the West justify its failure to acknowledge the contribution to the human heritage made by Joseph Niedham, who compiled the encyclopedia on the Science and Civilisation of China in 25 volumes, as large as the *Encyclopedia Britannica?* Where are the laurels laid at the feet of Mexican artist Diego Rivera, Lee Quan Yu, the founder of the Confucian revival, and Che Guevara, the protagonist of contemporary revolutionary romanticism?

The list of people who have not been honoured despite the indelible marks they have made on human civilisation is endless. This is why the world needs the Ibn Khaldun award: so that mankind can pay due respect to the greatest possible number of pioneers in the advancement of human civilisation as a whole, without discrimination. The award will allow us to recognise the contributions of the civilisations of the East, notably the Chinese/Asian, Islamic, African, and Latin American spheres.

The invitation to establish such an award should have been proffered at an international forum, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Arab League or the Organisation of Latin American Nations. International circumstances, at the end of the 20th century, are such that the challenges to the current international order and the path to the future are contingent upon the revival of the Asian and Islamic spheres. These same circumstances are the reason why the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which will meet in Tehran on 5 December, coincides with the inception of a "new Silk Road" between East and West, passing through the Arab/Islamic world. This is why, for this new and necessary international prize, I have proposed a name that symbolises scholastic, intellectual, scientific and social achievement in the name of all humanity, in honour of Abdel-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, the universally renowned historian and chronicler, and the father of sociology.

Ibn Khaldun is the author of the concept of *asabiya*, a concept that translates in contemporary terms as the spirit of national unity and social solidarity based on faith, justice and autonomy. This name could not be more appropriate to the circumstances and the aspirations of the Oriental world today. It heralds the return of the Eastern civilisations to their central place in human history, after a four-century period of marginalisation and neglect. If Ibn Khaldun were to return today, how would we explain our current state of weakness and disintegration? Yet, at the same time, his theory of history and *asabiya* gives us cause for optimism, for it explains the rise — and ultimate decline — of nations.

Now (or never) is the time

Future perspectives on the strategic and political fronts: **Ahmed Abdel-Halim** suggests a programme for renewal

The radical changes which have occurred on the regional and global scene in the past 25 years make it imperative for the Arab world to find a suitable role for itself today. The Arabs' recent experiences may have forged a historical pattern which will determine the course of their lives in the future. Such experiences include the October War, the Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Syrian disengagement agreements, the Camp David Accords, Madrid and Oslo, as well as the first Gulf War, the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon, and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

The faltering negotiations for a peaceful settlement between Israel and its Arab partners, the minimal victories scored by the Arabs, the acute crises and attempts to set up initiatives for economic cooperation with Israel (with no corresponding progress in security and political initiatives): all these are sufficient motives for the Arabs to pause and consider a new political and strategic perspective. The situation is further compounded by inter-Arab disputes, which at times have escalated to armed combat, and the Turkish-Israeli alliance, which poses a direct threat to the Arab region and to the Middle East in general.

In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel, backed by US might, represents a special case as far as Egypt and the other Arab countries are concerned. Israel is a clear political, economic and military challenge. The Israeli economy is directly linked to its military, political and strategic goals. This solid economic base, built not on natural resources, but mainly on the economic and financial assistance it receives, has enabled the country to achieve political, strategic, military and technological supremacy over the Arab parties, fragmented and torn as they are.

Israel has been successful in mobilising and organising the resources of its society, exploiting international support, and mustering all its scientific and technological capabilities to establish and nurture research and development capabilities, the mainstay of its supremacy over its Arab neighbours. Israel has therefore been able to project a positive image at the regional and global levels; whereas the image given by Arab societies is still riddled with doubts and uncertainties. In practical terms, the public face that Israel shows the international community has enabled it to establish a network of economic, and consequently political, international relations, which all reflect positively on Israel's position in the Middle East, to the detriment of the Arabs.

Culture provides the overall framework for this situation, since culture determines identity in the final analysis. The Arab-Israeli conflict is primarily a cultural conflict. This role needs to be profoundly examined, if we are to identify the potential strengths of the Arab position. We need to ask ourselves: What is the Arab strategy in addressing issues of vital concern?

How do we deal with problems emerging from the present situation on the ground, in light of the political and diplomatic manoeuvres of Israel and the US? How are we to react to the new alliances being established in the Middle East? How can we confront the religious foundations of the Israeli state, which have sparked off various forms of terrorism in the region? It is imperative, first of all, to assert Arab political and economic leadership and to prevent our enemies from getting the upper hand.

The toughest challenge, for the Arabs, is to resist involvement in every single one of the many events which rock the region. We must not succumb to this whirlpool of events, since passivity can only deepen the differences between us; nor should we withdraw from international and regional affairs, leaving the field open to Israel. We must maintain a high level of involvement in international and regional affairs. We must intervene in the context of a new pan-Arab national order which will guarantee our rights and provide the optimum conditions for the realisation of our objectives. In this way, we can resume our active role in the Middle East. Economic reform can acquire new momentum. The Arabs must act on the assumption that they are regional leaders, with a positive role to play in regional and international affairs. This is the very essence of the lesson we must learn from the series of crises which our region has faced.

We need to draw our guidelines from basic values, rather than random policies. One of the new challenges facing us all is the cycle of traditionalism which has pulled us back to where we are today. We must remain aware of the fact that the Arab world is not in a vacuum; it is situated within a larger global entity and, as such, must interact with the rest of the international community. The Arabs today face a host of challenges on all sides. We must move toward well-defined objectives, maintain a central role in the region and translate this role into direct economic, political, cultural and social benefits for the Arab peoples.

Egypt's role is of particular importance. Its impact on the world order and the Arab region derives from the effectiveness of its role within the Arab context. Egypt — and, for that matter, any Arab country — expands and intensifies its role when it identifies with the Arab consensus. It is not in Egypt's interest, nor in the interest of any Arab country, to permit the Arab status quo to persist. A restructuring of inter-Arab relations on the basis of new principles is necessary. The question of Egypt's "Arab identity" was unequivocally settled by Mubarak upon his accession to power: "Egypt is Arab by its very destiny, and is indeed honoured to be so... Egypt's relation to the Arab nation is that of the part to the whole... the bonds are reinforced by religion, geography, history, civilisation and shared hopes and fears." The nature and limits of Egypt's Arab role are not subject to choices or ideological inclinations, but, rather, result from the interaction of numerous factors at the national and regional levels, in addition to the variables at play within the new world order.

Arab unity and solidarity have been through various phases; but since the eruption of the second Gulf War, discord and fragmentation, the erosion of the Arab League (the institutional structure of the Arab order) and the escalation of disputes between Arab countries have become the rule. The situation on the Arab scene is reflected in the functioning of the Arab League. At the same time, interest in and concern for Arab causes are lost in the maze of petty domestic squabbles. This situation has allowed Israel and the US to dabble freely in the affairs of the region. Their freedom of action is further consolidated by the US's direct military presence in the Middle East in general, and in the Arabian Gulf in particular.

By cooperating with the other Arab nations, Egypt was able to play an important role in the Arab region. It focused on bringing the Arabs together over vital issues. Such a role was essential, given the determined endeavours being made to fragment the Arab region and extinguish Arab hopes for a better future. Egypt's role was reflected in concrete decisions and actions, taken with conviction, force and vigour. Egypt's policy is characterised by a marked realism, a wise decision if Arab unity is to enable us to address the risks and challenges of the future.

Egypt's political discourse reveals the various axes around which government policy revolves. The main axis is Egypt's contribution to the security of the Arab nation, in fostering Arab solidarity and settling the Palestinian problem through a political solution acceptable in the present historical contingency. Egypt exercises this role in the diplomatic sphere through a network of effective relations, clear-cut plans for Arab security, well-defined objectives. In this respect, it must take into account available Arab resources and capabilities. Egypt is also striving to halt the collapse of the entire Arab order, consolidate consensus as well as conceptual, economic and military integration and coordinate the various Arab security systems.

For a collective Arab role to be effective, Arab objectives must be defined carefully, while tasks and responsibilities must be distributed among the Arab countries in accordance with their respective capabilities. Our commitments must be honoured; the fundamental threats to our security must be identified; and the mechanisms for settling disputes and mending regional relations must be established.

When the Arabs are in agreement, there is no limit to what we can achieve. When we are divided, we give our enemies a chance to step in and wreak havoc. Arab resources and capabilities are distributed among all the Arab countries. No single country enjoys a monopoly over certain resources; nor do the Arab states, alone, qualify for entrance to the new century, characterised by the prevalence of massive economic and political blocs. Arab solidarity, therefore, is not an ideological but a strategic imperative. Efforts to this end must be backed by economic and technological capabilities, not to mention military coordination. In the final analysis, then, a collective stance is necessary to address regional problems. Disparities in effectiveness and capabilities could make the question of collective leadership seem absurd; but the fact remains that a common Arab strategy is crucial. A unified Arab leadership could work out the optimum distribution of roles and thus contribute most effectively towards the resolution of the Arab crisis.

The concept of unity, however, needs to be universally accepted in the Arab region. If this acceptance is to be gained, unity must integrate the differences and disparities between the Arab states, each of which should refrain from intervening in the others' domestic affairs. Unity must comprise economic and developmental as well as cultural, political and social dimensions.

As Arabs, our future strategic effectiveness is in our hands. Can we mobilise our societies and bring about political, strategic and technological change? Can we identify foreign policy challenges and establish a list of priorities? We must be prepared for the full impact of globalism; we must take into account the role of culture and civilisation as new determinants in international relations in the future. But above all, statements of Arab solidarity must become effective now.

The writer is an expert in military and strategic affairs at the Cairo-based Centre for Middle East Studies.



Wind in their sails

HARMONIA PRAGENIS, the wind section of the Prague Chamber Orchestra, will perform on 9 December at Al-Hanager Arts Centre. The repertoire of the orchestra, which was founded in 1951, runs the gamut of the Western tradition. Their concert programmes, while concentrating on the major classical works of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, reach back to the High Baroque, with Bach, Handel and Vivaldi, and forward to the Romantics, particularly the music of Schubert and Mendelssohn, while also including items from the present century, including works by Britten, Honegger, Prokofiev and Stravinsky.

The orchestra aims, as well, to give wider exposure to many Czech composers, contemporary and non-contemporary. The group are regular performers on the international concert circuit, and count among their number several distinguished soloists. this week's concert is organised *by the Embassy of the Czech Republic, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture.*

(For full details, see Listings, opposite)

Birds without feathers

David Blake is told not to worry: the feathers come later

Cairo Opera Ballet Company and Cairo Opera Orchestra: Swan Lake; director, Abdel-Moneim Kamel; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 20 November

How much later? This *Swan Lake* looked very beautiful. All material things about it, the lake, the moonlight on the water, the palaces, grottoes, furnishings, costumes and, above all, colours of the highest class — and the royals knew how to dress for a change. The entire company were high-mannered.

Abdel-Moneim Kamel, whatever anyone says, knows how to set a production. For him this opera house has genuine meaning. If you expect something else, a soliciting manner from your dancers, then go somewhere else. He has his standards. Everyone should be grateful for that.

And then the dancers. This *Swan Lake* comes at a time when in most other theatres everyone does their own thing. It can even be produced in drag. She, principal dancer, can be a man. And the prince is often a woman. And the swans are notable as birds for their capricious, indefensible characters, so they can settle for anything, and no grumbles.

Cairo swans stick to being birds. Very alluring ones, tall, flowing and imperious. No nonsense and no mannerism. The production is straight on. If you feel it could be livened up by a bit of academic camp, again, try somewhere else, maybe London.

It is customary these days to give a list of choreographers, from Petipa and on to Abdel-Moneim Kamel. Kamel adds or subtracts here and there, but the structure remains. And it more than suffices. These old classical ballets are so far out of fashion, they slip easily into cabaret, crime, and, as the entire age is on the slips, one twist too many and the director will throw the entire edifice, queens, birds and magic layabouts on to the sidewalk and let the black and white Odettes fend for themselves.

At least, as a dancer, if you have trained in the classical manner, you have the compensation of a longer career on the boards than you would have without it. Two hundred slow grands pliés before breakfast toughen you for the jungle of the dance world to come.

The old-fashioned four acts of *Swan Lake* are maintained. From the beginning there was no doubt as to who was in musical control and it was the conductor, Mustafa Nagui. The beat throughout was unbending and without nuance. Doubtful if this inspires dancers, but at least they have something to lean upon which should do as the acts move on. It had dignity, yes, but the forward sweep of the dance, no.

The court clown, Alexander Kiriniok, carries the entire first act on his shoulders with the greatest elan. His jumps and turns and tempi are precise, in spite of the slow tempo demanded by the orchestra. The home swans and the waltz of the sovereign princesses progressed through the craggy, old, pure Petipa choreography. The cygnets were larger than usual, grandes dames, Egyptian mother types rather than small white water babies trying out their first feathers.

Act II introduced Erminia Kamel as Odette, whiter than white, doing the great things this bird queen must do. She did them all, the steps were there, but she seemed uneasy. Maybe she missed Gorbatchof as her Prince. We, the audience, certainly did. Kamel has her way, like Markova did, of managing the difficult role, but she was out of mood for her usual grand flights.

As for Dimitri Damazirof, we should not be involved with Siegfried's arms. It is his support of Odette, his involvement and amazement at her apparition that matters. The boys in the Conservatoire Ballet know how to go about this romance better than he. Elevation, lacking; the dancing, slow; no musicality. Oh those arms.

Act III presents the entire company. The Prince has had enough of real girls: he wants birds even though swans do bite. There is consternation, all well managed in this stylish production, particularly the mixture of the various divertissement. The entry of Sahar Helmy and the troupe, black slashed with emerald green, is flashing, almost Spanish. And from behind the men's muletas the sex bomb of the evening, the black swan queen danced by Era Prokoponko, darts into the dull royal party.

And so the story goes. Prince is struck dumb while the white queen in the background, dead centre of the lake, loses out to the dark intruder who proceeds to set the party whirling by doing her 32 infamous *fouettes sur place*. But Prokoponko didn't. She ended early. No matter, she wrecked the royal show and the Prince goes off with the boys to see what's cooking in the lake.

Act IV and the lake looks threatening. Odette has not been forgotten. She is under the protection of a mafia bad man who hangs around swan lakes, looking for wealthy queens. Odette and Prince soon fix him. Theirs is the greater, the absolute thing, true love. In some productions the baddie wins the game, the Prince drops dead and the Queen goes back into the water. Not this time. Stage trap-door opens in front of the mafia man, flames and dry ice envelop him, and he slips down to Hell to join Don Giovanni.

The audience is happy, goes home. The jaded of heart are already dead — with boredom. Only balletomanes, dancers, kids and other mad folk of quality are happy.



I Fagiolini — a happy replacement

A British Egyptian Musical Evening: Amadeus Chamber Orchestra; I Fagiolini group; Small Hall, Cairo Opera House; 25 November

This concert was really feathers without a bird. Because of Luxor, the Guildhall Concert Group, billed for this night, decided that it was better to stay home and allow someone else to come. Someone else did, the Fagiolini.

The Amadeus of course performed. The only trouble is that it plays nearly always the same programme.

This night we did *not* have anything from the *Four Seasons*. But we had stock performances of Albinoni and Boccherini, with Britten's *Simple Symphony*, which is in line for stock treatment also and, considering the variety the other orchestras of Cairo put before the public, the fare offered by the Amadeus is limited.

The orchestra itself begins to show the lassitude of repetition. It no longer plays with its old flair, even for the hoary perennials presented. And this night's show was decidedly wispy. Why don't they try, at least, the 20th century and dump Boccherini and his sort for a few seasons?

They began with Albinoni — the Adagio. The long, familiar melody soaring over plucked strings was pleasant, but it is beginning to wear thin, giving signs of sinking out of hearing. Then came Boccherini, *Notturna del struda di Madrid*. It is catchy, easy and well-worn by the Amadeus. After this, Boccherini again, a Cello concerto with Mahmoud Saleh as soloist.

These bits and pieces, that often make up the mosaic of the mad musical cultural classical world, are open for ridicule. Saleh's cello never grunts, and he played the neat, attractively superficial music with elegant ease.

Britten's *Symphony* can sound very different to what was played on this occasion. His music is many-sided, with both dark and light predominating. El-Sisi can conduct this as mostly dark and it becomes too large for this small hall and there is almost the smell of the North Sea about it. In this performance, it was all the one sound — light, jerky, full of little puns which fell flat. The Amadeus, nonetheless, had a standing ovation.

The Fagiolini are a celebrated group of very clever singers. Their work is coordination, a fine art in itself. They have two sopranos who can really sing, easy, with good humour and wit, through a large repertoire, with every word clear.

The group sang with great energy, beginning with Hildegaard of Bingen pieces, dating from 1179. As a composer she doesn't show her age at all and her hymn to green trees and their putrefying effect on the airscapes surrounding mankind are a joy and a warning to hear for those consigned to a daily struggle through the daily carbon dioxide jungle. Hildegaard, the patron saint of save-our-streets from the gas fogs of now, a priestess of practicality.

Through madrigals and motets we speeded, driven by the sharp, critical talent of the Fagiolini and their warm, humorous approach to human frailties. They are like W.C. Fields when they reach our times. There are other ways to laugh besides being malicious. The traditional Scots O my love is like a red, red, rose was deep and truly moving. Their director Robert Hollingworth, and the two sopranos, Mhairi Lawson and Nicola Kennedy, together with basses and counter-tenors and tenor proper, a team which should have had a second concert here to show their variety and versatility were given this one riveting concert.

The Cathy Berberian pieces, she the wife of the Italian composer Berio, are breathcatching.

Their concert ended with their swinging into strange territory. A humorous mix of gentle but lethal observation from the cage where the wonderfully awful Joyce Grenfell sent out her barbs and thrusts into a world gone berserk. Fagiolini were an unexpected bonus. They have feathers and can fly.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Group Show
Donia Gallery, 20 Abdel-Aziz Gawish St, Borg El-Atebā', Bab El-Louq. Tel 355 8367. Daily exc Fri, 12pm-10pm. Until 4 Dec.
Over 10 artists exhibit their work under the title Still Life.

Students of the AUC Plastic Arts Group
Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, American University in Cairo, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5436. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-9pm. Until 4 Dec.

Claire Kersten (Paintings)
Cairo Atelier, 2 Karim El-Dawla St, Downtown. Tel 574 6730. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm, 6pm-9pm. Until 5 Dec.
Works under the title The Other Way Round.

Silvia Baechli (Drawings) and **Eric Hattan** (Photographs)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 6-9pm. Until 5 Dec.

Wafaï Rifaat (Sculpture) and **Farouk Shehata** (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 6 Dec.

Italian Drawing in the 1990s
Centre of Arts, 1 El-Maahad El-Swissri St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1.30pm & 7.30pm-9pm. Until 10 Dec.

Abu Bakr El-Nawawi, Mervat Refaat & Mohamed Sabry (Paintings)
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 13 Dec.

May He Live Forever
British Council Gallery, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 301 0319. Daily exc Fri, 9am-9pm. Until 13 Dec.
A display of books, pictures and drawings, with audio-visual documentation from the 1920s, relating to the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb and Egyptology.

Abdou Ramzi (Sculpture)
Zeinab Khatoun House, behind El-Azhar Mosque. Tel 340 2287. Daily exc Fri, 10-9pm. Until 14 Dec.

André Gelpke (Photographs)
Goethe Institute, 5 El-Bustan St, Downtown. Tel 575 9877. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 19 Dec.
Aspects of contemporary photography under the title Nostalgia.

Group Show
Faculty of Fine Arts, Zamalek. Until 21 Dec.
Five artists from the Saint-Etienne Fine Arts Faculty exhibit their work.

Zeinab El-Saginy (Paintings)
Khan El-Maghraby Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-9pm. Until 23 Dec.
Works under the title Egyptian Tales.

Members of the Photographic Salon of Egypt
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, American Uniersity in Cairo, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 5424. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 23 Dec.

Golo (Cartoons)
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louq. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 23 Dec.

Les Souffles
Museum of Modern Art, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 342 0601. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 24 Dec.

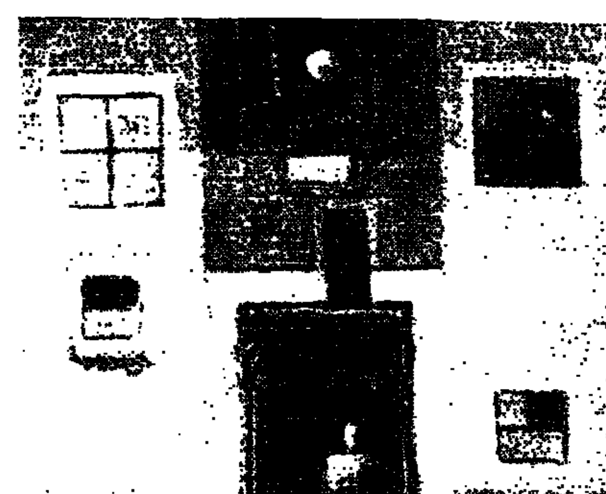
Assem Sharaf (Paintings)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Opening 9 Dec, 7pm. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 6-9pm. Gathering around the artist's work 14 Dec, 7pm. Until 30 Dec.

Collective Exhibition
Sheba Gallery, 6 Sri Lanka St, Zamalek. Tel 340 9192. Daily exc Sun, 10am-8pm. Until 9 Jan.
Jewelry by Suad Raja and Zina Hemady, textiles by Sylva Nasrallah and Michel Pastore, pottery by Evelyne Porret and Suzanne Wissa Wassef, and watercolour paintings and ink drawings by Rana Chalabi.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 342 0601. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956).

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
Permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar.



Eric Hattan

FILMS

Egyptomania: A Film Series
British Council auditorium, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 301 0319.
4 Dec, 6pm: **The Ten Commandments**, directed by Cecil De Mille.
10 Dec, 6pm: **The Egyptian**, directed by Michael Curtiz.

Universal Laws
Japanese Information and Culture Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. Tel 354 9431. 4 Dec, 6pm.
Directed by Kazuyuki Izutsu (1990).

Italian Films
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.
6 Dec, 6pm: **Identificazione Di Una Donna** (1982), directed by M. Antonioni.
7 Dec, 6pm: **Oltre Le Nuvole**, directed by M. Antonioni.

French Films
French Cultural Centre, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679.
4 Dec, 7pm: **Vieille Canaille**, directed by Gérard Jourd'hui.
7 Dec, 7pm: **Nelly et M. Arnaud**, directed by Claude Sautet.
10 Dec, 7pm: **Nelly et M. Arnaud**, as above.
French Cultural Centre, Heliopolis annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824.
4 Dec, 7pm: **Le Fantôme de la Liberté**, directed by Luis Buñuel.
10 Dec, 7pm: **Danton**, directed by Andrzej Wajda.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Face/Off
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm; Thur-Sat midnight show. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
An intelligent and entertaining action film with John Travolta and Nicolas Cage.

Conspiracy Theory
MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
With Julia Roberts.

My Best Friend's Wedding
Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.
With Julia Roberts.

The Peacemaker
Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 3.30pm & 6.30pm.
With Nicole Kidman.

Ismailia Rayeh Gaey (Ismailia Back and Forth)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm.
With Hanan Tork, Khaled El-Nabawi, Mohamed Heneidi and singer Mohamed Fouad.

Hanheb We Ne'eb (We'll Love and Rise Above)
Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm.
With Farouq El-Fishawi.

MUSIC

Fulbright Benefit Concert
Fulbright Commission Main Office, 20 Gamaleddin Abul-Mahasen St, Garden City. Tel 357 2258. 4 Dec, 7.30pm.
American singer Bill Evenhouse performs authentic American folk songs, personal compositions and Christmas songs.

Arabic Music Ensemble
Small Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 4 Dec, 2pm.
Conducted by Salah Ghobashi.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 7 Dec, 8pm.
Compositions by Bartok, Rechberger and Beethoven, performed by the orchestra, along with cello soloist Mounir Bakia; conducted by Moustafa Nagui.

Harmonia Pragensis
El-Hanager, Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. 9 Dec, 8.30pm.
The wind group of the famous Prague Chamber Orchestra performs selections from world composers and old Czech masters. For details, see photo-caption.

Opera Thaïs
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 9, 11, 14, 16 & 18 Dec. 8pm.
The Cairo Opera Company, with soloists Iman Mostafa, Eugenie Demarchiev, Hassan Kamy, Reda El-Wakil and Mona Rafla perform, under conductor Patrick Fournillier and director Jean-Louis Pichon.

THEATRE

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Nasr City. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm; Thur 9.30pm.

Taht El-Tahdid (Under Threat)
El-Talia, Ataba Square, Downtown. Tel 5937 948. Daily 9.30pm.

El-Establ (The Stable)
El-Talia, as above. Daily 8pm.

Zizo Mahboub Zamanoh (Zizo the Beloved of His Time)
Floating Theatre, Adjacent to University Bridge, Manial. Tel 364 9516. Daily 10.30am.

Alabanda
El-Fardos Theatre, El-Beohin Sq. Tel 482 3017. Daily 8.30pm; Thur 9.30pm.

Cinderella
Puppet Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 0954. Daily 6.30pm; Fri & Sun 11am.

El-Zaim (The Leader)
El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Haram. Tel 386 3952. Daily 8.30pm; Wed & Thur 10pm.

LECTURES

The Architecture of the Mosque of Ibn Tulun
Netherlands Institute for Archaeology and Arabic Studies, 1 Mahmoud Azmi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 0076. 4 Dec, 5.30pm.
Lecture by Dr Tarek Swelim, American University in Cairo.

The Art of Theatrical Spectacle
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. 4 Dec, 6pm.
Lecture by Alfred Farag. The talk will be followed by the projection of Alexander the Great, directed by Robert Rossen and starring Barry Jones-Harry.

Tutankhamun and the Cairo Museum
British Council, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 301 0319. 7 Dec, 6pm.
Lecture by Dr Mohamed Saleh.

Temples and Churches of Roman Kellis in Dakhla Oasis
Egypt Exploration Society, British Council, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 301 0319. 8 Dec, 7pm.
Lecture by Dr Colin Hope, senior lecturer in Egyptology, Monash University, Melbourne.

La Politique Future de la Russie au Moyen-Orient
CEDEJ, 14 Dr Abdel-Rahman El-Sawi St (ex-Gam'eyet El-Nisr), Mohandessin. Tel 361 1932. 9 Dec, 5pm.
Lecture in French by Professor Alexey Vassiliev, from the Academy of Science, Moscow.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

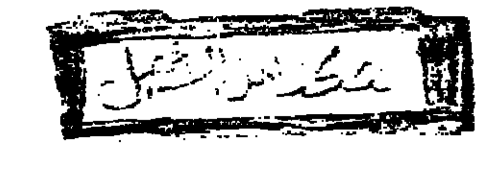
Around the galleries

WINDOWS and doorways at which figures stand dominate the mixed media paintings of **Adel El-Masry** which are on exhibit at the **Art Appreciation Cultural Palace**, Sidi Gaber, Alexandria. A sense of anxiety, claustrophobia and alienation pervades these voyeuristic mis-en-scenes.

Ink drawings by **Hoda El-Masry** are on show at the **Atelier du Caire**. The lines are fine and precise — certainly the artist is in control of her medium. However, the heavy-handed use of women as symbols (of oppression, social injustice... etc) make these drawings too loudly didactic.

Adel El-Masry

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**





The opening ceremony of the Cairo International Film Festival was dominated by recent, tragic events, writes **Khairiya El-Bishlawi**

Members of the international jury at the opening ceremony, before a portrait of Saadeddin Wahba

Absence at the heart

Monday's opening ceremony of the 21st round of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) turned out, in part, to be a memorial for the late Saadeddin Wahba, the chairman of the festival for 12 years who passed away only a few days before the inauguration.

This gave the supposedly international event a very local atmosphere, so much so that foreign faces were hardly noticeable among the multitude of Egyptians who turned out for the ceremony. Many of the women and actresses were in black — the black of mourning rather than the sequined evening variety. There was virtually no translation. Arabic dominated the emceeing and those in charge of the event seemed totally oblivious to the presence of foreign guests. But were there any foreign guests?

In fact, foreigners could be counted on the fingers of one hand. All seemed to be present for one very specific task, their role as members of the jury. When they were ushered onto the stage, along with the two Egyptian members, actress Youssra and director Ashraf Fahmy, the Russian Director Vladmir Khotnenko, in an attempt to introduce a less sombre note into the proceedings, took the hand of the American critic Beglary Katayoum and began dancing, introducing one of the rare smiles into the event.

The opening ceremony was devoid of the usual dancing tableaux which have been such a feature of previous festivals, and of the *zaffa* that used to greet the participants in front of the auditorium of the Medinat Nasr Conference Hall.

However, and in spite of the intimate local atmosphere of the 21st round, high ranking dignitaries were conspicuous by their absence. The minister of culture apologised for a last minute cancellation due to illness, delegating Gaber Asfour, chairman of the Supreme Council of Culture, who after conveying the minister's apologies, inaugurated the round, named after the festival's late chairman, and promising that the festival will remain as Wahba had wanted it.



Samiha Ayoub and Gaber Asfour *photo: Mohamed Wassim*

The first item in the ceremony was the screening of movie clips of Egyptian monuments from Upper Egypt — where the recent terrorist attack took place — to the sound of operatic passages, all wrapped in special light effects to enhance a mood of sadness and muffled rage.

The opening ceremony this year, and perhaps for the first time in the history of the festival, formed an integral whole, despite the varied nature of its component elements. There were the images of the pharaonic monuments; of Saadeddin Wahba, with his distinctly Egyptian features, who despite his illness had continued supervising the last minute preparations of the festival, not aware that the opening ceremony would become a forum for his eulogy.

There was a short film about Wahba's life and achievements entitled *Al-Ashgar Tamout Waqifa* (Trees Die Standing), with footage from his life with actress Samiha Ayoub, whom he met and married when she was acting in his 1960s play *Al-Sibinsa* (Third Class), as well as clips from famous Egyptian films such as *Al-Haram* (Sin), *Al-Zawga Al-Thaniya* (The Second Wife), *Abi Fawq Al-Shagara* (My Father Atop a Tree) — all films scripted by Wahba. When a scene from the film *Zuqaq Al-Midaq* (Midaq Alley), based on Mahfouz's novel and Wahba's first experience of script-writing, was shown, we heard Hussein Riyad's voice saying that everything has an end and this is the end.

Although the two events which gave the opening ceremony its character — the attack on tourists in Luxor and the passing away of Saadeddin Wahba — could not have been anticipated by the director Samir Seif, who was in charge of staging the ceremony, he undoubtedly succeeded in rising to the occasion with dignity. The three films he had prepared before these two events, dedicated to the works and lives of three artists honoured this year, namely Ismail Yassin, Fatin Abdel-Wahab and Zaki Rustom, were not out of tune with the general solemnity of the occasion, introducing a nostalgic note. The three artists all died 25 years ago.

The films showed highlights from some of their memorable works and it was thanks to the skill of Samir Seif that these films, as well as the one dedicated to Saadeddin Wahba, seemed to converge at many moments to show the heyday of Egyptian cinema.

All the applause in the ceremony was for the deceased while all those who stood on the stage seemed to be overshadowed by the presence of the dead. When Saadeddin Wahba's picture was first projected on the stage there was a five-minute standing ovation; again there was a minute of silence in honour of his memory, and when his widow, actress Samiha Ayoub came on the stage, her words were choked with tears. Saadeddin Wahba was the absent centre of the whole ceremony.

It is certainly a coincidence, though not devoid of meaning, that the film chosen to open the festival — *Evita* — begins and ends with a funeral. The first, that of Eva Peron's father, is a modest funeral of a poor man; the last is that of the legendary Eva who has risen from the abyss to the height of power. Though the film is a musical, with all the paraphernalia that comes with the genre, there were very eloquent moments and a searing political commentary on the nature of dictatorships. It was unfortunate that Alan Parker, the director of the film who was to head the jury, declined his invitation to the festival. He certainly succeeded in making Madonna, who 10 years ago was voted worst actress for her film *Who's That Girl*, a convincing incarnation of the South American icon, which is no mean feat.

21st Cairo International Film Festival: Programme

Thursday, 4 December

Diana
12 noon: Les Silences du Palais (Tunisia)
2.30pm: Honeymoon (Germany)
5pm: Bint Familia (Tunisia)
8pm: Roula (Germany)

Normandy
12 noon: Sango Malo (Cameron)
2.30pm: Ma Vie en Rose (Belgium-France)
5pm: Lawn Dogs (UK)
8pm: Suspicious Minds (Canada)

Roxy
12 noon: Sidharta (Austria)
2.30pm: Basquiat (USA)
5pm: Crime Time (Netherlands)
8pm: Angelheart (USA)

Metro
12 noon: Repertory (Poland)
2.30pm: Fool's Paradise (USA)
5pm: Too Much Sleep (USA)
8pm: Habit (USA)

Al-Hanager
9am: Manhattan by Numbers (USA)
11.30am: The Shadow of the Pharoah (Morocco)
2pm: Raj Biraj (India)
4.30pm: Brittle (The Netherlands)

Lido
12 noon: Gotti (USA)
2.30pm: Dream of the Butterfly (Italy)
5pm: My Daughter is Mine (Germany)
8pm: Delinquent (USA)

Miami
12 noon: Silent Touch (Poland)
2.30pm: Dream Lover (USA)
5pm: George B (USA)
8pm: Striptease (USA)

Cairo
12 noon: Illumination (Poland)
2.30pm: Touch of Spice (Germany)
5pm: Comme Des Rois (France)
8pm: Propellerblume (Switzerland)

Karim I
12 noon: Good Life (Spain)
2.30pm: Kiss Me (Germany)
5pm: Serpent's Kiss (UK)
8pm: Trop Tard (Romania)

Odeon I
12 noon: Escape (Hungary)
2.30pm: An Unexpected Walk (Bosnia)
5pm: Body Language (USA)
8pm: Sworn to Justice (USA)

Odeon II
12 noon: Drums of Fire (Morocco)
2.30pm: Just Friends (USA)
8pm: Where Are You I Am Here (Italy)

Cosmos I
12 noon: The Passenger (Sweden)
2.30pm: L'Appartement (France)
5pm: Workaholic (Germany)
8pm: The Road to Melville (USA)

Cosmos II
12 noon: Constant Factor (Poland)
2.30pm: Honeymoon (Germany)
5pm: Up on the Roof (UK)
8pm: The Baron (Greece)

El-Salam
3pm: The Eyes, The Mouth (Italy)
6pm: Home for the Holidays (USA)
8.30pm: The Eyes, The Mouth (Italy)

Friday, 5 December

Diana
12 noon: Family Life (Poland)
2.30pm: A la Recherche du Mari de ma Femme (Morocco)
5pm: Dream Lover (USA)
8pm: Suspicious Minds (Canada)

Normandy
12 noon: OK Garage (UK)
2.30pm: Sling Blade (USA)
5pm: The Road to Melville (USA)
8pm: Fargo (USA)

Roxy
12 noon: The Illusionist (Netherlands)
2.30pm: Le Ballon D'or (Guinae Bissau)
5pm: Up on the Roof (UK)
8pm: Late Full Moon (Bulgaria)

Metro
12 noon: Ma Vie en Rose (Belgium-France)
2.30pm: 17 and Under (USA)
5pm: The Baron (Greece)
8pm: The Outsider (Slovenia)

Al-Hanager
9am: Sidharta (Austria)
11.30am: Chappaqua (Austria)
2pm: Le Mépris (France)
4.30pm: Quatre Femmes d'Egypte (Canada)

Lido
12 noon: The Tale of the Two Ganpatraos (India)
2.30pm: Fools (South Africa)
5pm: Last Seen Wearing a Blue Skirt (Hungary)
8pm: Fool's Paradise (USA)

Miami
12 noon: Dream Against A White Background (Greece)
2.30pm: Felix (Sloenia)
5pm: Halfaouine (Tunisia)
8pm: Sworn to Justice (USA)

Cairo
12 noon: Prologue (India)
2.30pm: Eye Witness (Italy)
5pm: Body Language (USA)
8pm: The Eyes, The Mouth (Italy)

Karim I
12 noon: Brittle (The Netherlands)
2.30pm: Lea (Germany)
5pm: Delinquent (USA)
8pm: Propelleblume (Switzerland)

Odeon I
12 noon: Illumination (Poland)
2.30pm: Honeymoon (Germany)
5pm: The Book of Great Wishes (Poland)
8pm: Traka-Trak (Bulgaria)

Odeon II
12 noon: Madonna and the Child (Philippines)
2.30pm: Dede (France)
5pm: Home for the Holidays (USA)
8pm: Dream of the Butterfly (Italy)

Cosmos I
12 noon: Just Friends (USA)
2.30pm: Dating the Enemy (USA)
5pm: Good Life (Spain)
8pm: Too Much Sleep (USA)

Cosmos II
12 noon: Wind Over the City (Greece)
2.30pm: Raj Biraj (India)
5pm: Eight Days a Week (USA)
8pm: Where Are You I Am Here (Italy)

El-Salam
3pm: Strong Shit (Germany)
6pm: Jumping At The Boneyard (USA)
8.30pm: Strong Shit (Germany)

Saturday, 6 December

Diana
12 noon: Strange Times (Azerbaijan)
2.30pm: Fool's Paradise (USA)
5pm: Home for the Holidays (USA)
8pm: Dream of the Butterfly (Italy)

Normandy
12 noon: My Daughter is Mine (Germany)
2.30pm: An Unexpected Walk (Bosnia)
5pm: 17 and Under (USA)
8pm: Roula (Germany)

Roxy
12 noon: Mother Alone (Sri Lanka)
2.30pm: One Life, Two Trails (Venezuela)
5pm: Eight Days a Week (USA)
8pm: Justice (Germany)

Metro
12 noon: The Guardian Angel (Spain)
2.30pm: Mektoub (Morocco)
5pm: OK Garage (UK)
8pm: Propellerblume (Switzerland)

Al-Hanager
9am: Yelema (Mali)
11.30am: The Sin (Egypt)
2pm: Twice a Woman (Netherlands)
4.30pm: The Vanishing (Netherlands)

Lido
12 noon: Constant Factor (Poland)
2.30pm: Disputed Vote (Spain)
5pm: Eye Witness (Italy)
8pm: Silent Touch (Poland)

Miami
12 noon: The Vanishing (The Netherlands)
2.30pm: Just Friends (USA)
5pm: Lawn Dogs (UK)
8pm: Punk Lawyer (The Netherlands)

Cairo
12 noon: Les Silences Du Palais (Tunisia)
2.30pm: The Illusionist (The Netherlands)
5pm: Book of Great Wishes (Poland)
8pm: Halfaouine (Tunisia)

Karim I
12 noon: Honeymoon (Germany)
2.30pm: Dying to Go Home (Portugal/The Netherlands)
5pm: Across the Lake (Macedonia)
8pm: L'Appartement (France)

Odeon I
12 noon: The Passenger (Sweden)
2.30pm: Spanish Soldier (Spain)
5pm: Bint Familia (Tunisia)
8pm: The Baron (Greece)

Odeon II
12 noon: Repertory (Poland)
5pm: The Eyes, The Mouth (Italy)
8pm: The Baron (Greece)

Cosmos I
12 noon: Madonna and the Child (Philippines)
2.30pm: Happy Birthday (Germany)
5pm: Suspicious Minds (Canada)
8pm: Sworn to Justice (USA)

Cosmos II
12 noon: Chappaqua (Austria)
2.30pm: Lea (Germany)
5pm: Eliatis Xenos (Greece)
8pm: Gulls and Gangsters (Hungary)

El-Salam
3pm: Crime Time (The Netherlands)
6pm: Ma Vie En Rose (Belgium)
8.30pm: Crime Time (The Netherlands)

Sunday, 7 December

Diana
12 noon: Les Résistants (Algeria)
2.30pm: Too Much Sleep (USA)
5pm: OK Garage (UK)
8pm: Sworn to Justice (USA)

Normandy
12 noon: Fool's Paradise (USA)
2.30pm: Bint Familia (Tunisia)
5pm: La Conciergerie (Canada)
8pm: Asphalt Tango (France-Rumania)

Roxy
12 noon: Happy Birthday (Germany)
2.30pm: The Guardian Angel (Spain)
5pm: Fools (South Africa)
8pm: Across the Lake (Macedonia)

Metro
12 noon: One Life, Two Trails (Venezuela)
2.30pm: Tsarevich Alexei (Russia)
5pm: Home for the Holidays (USA)
8pm: White Side of the End (South Korea)

Al-Hanager
9am: Lumière Noire (Mauritania)
11.30am: Lea (Germany)
2pm: The Dream of the Butterfly (Italy)
4.30pm: Dying to Go Home (Portugal-Netherlands)

Lido
12 noon: Mother Alone (Sri Lanka)
2.30pm: Chappaqua (Austria)
5pm: Madonna and the Child (Philippines)
8pm: Jumping in the Bone Yard (Poland)

Miami
12 noon: Sidharta (Austria)
2.30pm: Good Life (Spain)
5pm: Asphalt Tango (France/Romania)
8pm: Gulls and Gangsters (Hungary)

Cairo
12 noon: A Story of Love And Death And Madness (Argentina)
2.30pm: Eliatis Xenos (Greece)
5pm: The Road to Melville (USA)
8pm: Workaholic (Germany)

Karim I
12 noon: Mektoub (Morocco)
2.30pm: Eight Days A Week (USA)
5pm: 17 And Under (USA)
8pm: Crime Time (The Netherlands)

Odeon I
12 noon: Brittle (The Netherlands)
2.30pm: Delinquent (USA)
5pm: Up on the Roof (UK)
8pm: Suspicious Minds (Canada)

Odeon II
12 noon: My Daughter Is Mine (Germany)
2.30pm: Le Carosse D'Or (France)
5pm: Birdy (USA)
8pm: Eye Witness (Italy)

Cosmos I
12 noon: Sling Blade (USA)
2.30pm: Touch of Spice (Germany)
5pm: The Book of Great Wishes (Poland)
8pm: Justice (Germany)

Cosmos II
12 noon: Illumination (Poland)
2.30pm: George B (USA)
5pm: The Serpent's Kiss (UK)
8pm: Roula (Germany)

El-Salam
3pm: The Baron (Greece)
6pm: L'Appartement (France)
8.30pm: The Baron (Greece)

Diana: 17, El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727.
Normandy: 31, El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254.
Metro: 35, Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897.
Roxy: Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344.
Hanager: Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861.
Lido: 23, Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284.
Miami: 38, Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656.
Cairo: Off 26th July St, Downtown. Tel 574 5350
Karim I: 15, Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830.
Odeon I & II: 4, Dr Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797.
Cosmos I & II: 12, Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537.
El-Salam: 65, Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072.

Plain Talk

Think of contemporary Cairo, and one of the first things that come to mind is that veritable institution, the café. It is not any exaggeration to say that no street in Cairo is devoid of a café. Some cafés have even distinguished themselves as informal literary and artistic salons. Indeed, many a young writer owes his fame to this or that café-salon.

Naguib Mahfouz used to hold his weekly salon at a series of cafés, the best known of which is Café Riche. This was, until it closed recently, one of Cairo's historical landmarks, an obligatory stop on the itinerary of any visiting writer or artist. During the '60s, Riche became the meeting place of young writers and revolutionaries. It was there that such literary figures as Taha Hussein, Tewfik El-Hakim, Youssef Idris and Ahmed Abdel-Moeti Hegazi used to meet.

Café Riche came into being at the end of the 19th century as a restaurant that also offered musical entertainment. A glimpse at the correspondence between the owner of the café and Cairo Governorate allows one to trace the development of the venue, situated on Soliman Pasha Street (now Talaat Harb). In earlier days, Café Riche used to have a garden with an open air theatre. It is on record that famous Egyptian singers like Sayed Darwish, Saleh Abdel-Hayy and Umm Kulthoum used to perform there.

The history of Riche is, in some ways, a history of contemporary Cairo. It was there in 1919 that the leaders of the revolution met and planned their moves. In his book *The National History of Egypt, 1914-1921*, Abdel-Rahman El-Rafe'i says that Café Riche was the meeting place of the "Effendis", that is members of the educated middle-class. It was there that some political assassinations were planned and in one case, the attack against one of Egypt's prime ministers, carried out.

The 1940s witnessed a revitalisation of Café Riche, when it became a literary venue. The café acted as a mid-wife, as it were, for a number of projects: the magazine *Al-Katib Al-Masri* (The Egyptian Writer), whose editor-in-chief was Taha Hussein, was launched there. It was at Riche that the literary magazine *Gallerie '68* was conceived, as was *The New Culture*, started by the surrealist painter and poet Ramses Younan.

Naturally, Riche makes an appearance in several literary works. It is mentioned in Naguib Mahfouz's trilogy and poet Aziz Adib gave one of his collections the title *Riche*. But perhaps the writer who should take the greatest credit for making Riche famous, or in his case infamous, is Naguib Surour, writer of "The Protocols of the Wisemen of Riche".

The text has now been translated into English by Lana Younis who is writing a PhD thesis to be submitted to Penn University. The topic of Lana's thesis is a comparison between American poet William Carlos Williams and a number of Arab poets whom she has called "The Café Riche Group". Below are a few lines from Lana's translation of Surour's poem:

First Protocol:
Read nothing be a lumberjack...
And carry a ton of books...
Place it beside a beer bottle...
or above a chair...
Drink & await the knights...
who will come one after the other...
each carrying a ton of books!

A Voice:
Ye knights of yesterday...
Yesterday passed with the knights...
behind the clouds of despair...
proceed to Café Riche...
The whole world is Café Riche...
Where everyone drowns his odium...
in the depth of the tumbler!

Mursi Saad El-Din

Years spent sorting out legal intricacies, backlogged cases, everyday injustices: citizens seeking redress, as **Mariz Tadros** discovers, are faced with a daunting task. But the appointment of new judges, accompanied by a reform of the judicial system, may do much to straighten out the legal kinks, while a workshop informing women of their rights before the law will help them ask the right questions

Laying down the law

In a heated argument with her husband, Saneya signed a document whereby she relinquished her rights to her children. For a long time now, she has been begging for a divorce, which her husband refuses to grant her. Now that she has signed, he is threatening her — he will grant her the divorce, but take away her children. Since he married another wife, he rarely comes to visit. Saneya, now pregnant with her fifth child, feels stuck — he doesn't contribute a penny to the household, but she is scared that the day she asks for a divorce will be the last time she sees her children.

Why did she sign the paper? "He was so aggressive, and he had a tight fist," she says, showing her wrist, still swollen from the last beating. Saneya's brothers, sensing that she will do anything to get out of this marriage, have gone to visit her husband — to negotiate a deal. They have signed a paper saying that she will forfeit all her rights — alimony, child assistance, etc. — if he divorces her.

Saneya told her story at the Centre for Women's Rights in Dar El-Salam, a densely-populated, working-class Cairene district. All kinds of women turned up for a two-day workshop to discuss their legal problems, or just to learn more about their rights under the law.

The majority of the sixty women who turned up on the first day are illiterate or semi-literate, poor, with no steady source of income and minimal awareness of their legal rights. Saneya was delighted to find out that the papers she and her brothers had signed are null and void. Under Egyptian law, the mother is obliged to care for her children until they reach the age of 15 if they are girls and 11 if they are boys. Saneya has three girls aged 15, 11, and five, as well as a five-year-old boy. Since her brothers do not have power of attorney, *she is entitled to all her rights* if her husband grants her a divorce. Saneya was also informed that, if she wishes to proceed with the divorce application, she will be entitled to temporary alimony until a verdict is issued.

The lawyers giving advice at this workshop, however, cautioned against signing just anything. Even if a woman and her spouse are not squabbling, and he asks her to sign a blank cheque under the pretext, for example, that he wants to issue an identity card for her, she must not go along with it, they emphasised. One woman signed a blank cheque for her husband and, now that they are divorcing, he says that she owes him LE1,000.

As for semi-literate women who are proud to have learned to write their names but have not yet learned to read and write, the lawyers warn them: do not write your name on a document, even if the person who wants you to sign it tells you its content. One woman complained that her husband had died at work. Although his employers told her it was an accident, she was determined to file a complaint at the police station. The employer told her to sign procedural papers. She complied, only to discover later that she had signed a withdrawal of her complaint.

The kinds of mistakes that could send uninformed women to prison are countless. Since women are often in charge of the family budget, and buy almost all the items needed by the household, they are often vulnerable to many forms of fraud. *Um* Mohamed, who wanted to buy a blanket and a stove for her family, agreed to pay the LE1,500 in instalments. The merchant requested that she sign a blank cheque, which he promised to tear up once she had paid all the instalments. The cheque is a sword of Damocles, which may continue to hang over her even after she finishes paying off the sum.

Nehad Abul-Qumsan, director of the centre, *challenges the common assumption that* poor women only want information on the Personal Status Law, marital relationships, and inheritance. Many other issues touch their lives directly, she maintains. In all the legal workshops the centre has held, whether in Cairo, Minya or Sohag, for instance, the new housing rental law was consistently brought up, she said. "People are confused; they are anxious that they might be thrown out, or have to pay very high rents."

Women tend to ask most frequently about local administrative laws, the rights of the municipal authorities, and the penalties for violation of various laws. This is not surprising, notes Abul-Qumsan; if a woman is selling vegetables on the street, or if her husband is working in an unregistered shop, they are likely to encounter problems with the municipal police at one point or another.

Second on the list of preoccupations are arrests and police raids. Dar El-Salam has a reputation as a hotbed of thugs and, ever since the national campaign against thugs began, the police have been especially active in the area. "Every time a fight breaks out, the police pick up anybody and everybody. A woman could see her son, her brother or her husband carted off to the police station," Abul-Qumsan explains.

Next on the list of women's most critical legal concerns is the issue of harassment. Most of the women did not know that rape is punishable by death or 25 years in prison. In cases of rape, pressure is often exerted on the victim, whether at the police station or elsewhere, *to accept to marry* the rapist. "We try and explain to the women that the judge is usually sympathetic to the victim's case and rapists are punished adequately. There is going to be a scandal anyway, so she might as well take it to court and have her dignity restored, rather than end up a double victim as the rapist's wife," says Abul-Qumsan.

The workshops highlighted the fact that, for women, knowing the ABCs of their legal rights is just as important as knowing how to read and write — especially since learning to write only their names can be so dangerous.



Easing the case-load

"We have had lawsuits which have been delayed for 10 years and over. I, for instance, have a tax lawsuit for one of my clients against the Ministry of Finance which was initially filed in 1984 and has not yet been ruled on, and another case from 1987 which is still frozen." So says Amir Salem, director of the Human Rights Legal Resource Centre in Cairo. And he is not alone in his complaints.

One couple who went to court to contest tax demands on a furnished *flat have waited 13 years for the case* to be heard at the Court of Appeal, said Salem. It has been delayed so many times and the flatowners have now emigrated — but the case is still pending in the courts.

"These people moved to France, I have no idea if they are even alive still, it's a stupid situation," said Salem.

The slow pace of justice makes many cases redundant by the time they actual reach court, defendants may have died or the situation changed in the years between the filing of a case and an actual hearing.

Four thousand judges hear more than 11 million cases every year in Egypt, according to the Ministry of Justice. Despite the fact that a judge may rule in over 200 cases in one hearing, the backlog of cases is enormous.

"*We have a serious problem with the* accumulation of lawsuits in our courts; a lawsuit may be delayed for anything from three to five years, especially civil and commercial suits. No wonder people become disheartened," says Maher Abdel-Wahid, deputy chief justice and senior under-secretary to the minister of justice. Ideally, a judge is not supposed to have more than 20 cases in one hearing, he said. Even with the addition of an evening shift from 5 to 9pm in some courts, the recent appointment of several more judges and the decision to have courts operating 12 months a year, the number of cases per hearing is far from the desired ideal. In fact, some lawyers claim that in some court sessions, judges have a good 300-400 cases to hear. In a move to reform and develop *the justice system on a judicial and* administrative level, the Ministry of Justice has embarked on a $17 million project, in cooperation with USAID. Two pilot projects are currently under way in Ismailia and North Cairo.

Abdel-Wahid emphasised that the problem in Egyptian courts is not that the judges' performance is not up to standard, but that there are no supporting factors to facilitate their work. "In Egypt, the judge has two jobs, the first is to look into cases, the second is administrative. When is he supposed to find time to write down the reasons for each ruling? In other countries judges never have to take care of administrative responsibilities," he said.

In an effort to counteract the delay caused by inefficiency and the countless bureaucratic steps involved in filing a case, the two pilot projects will include timetables of court hearings *being screened on computers, instead* of having the bailiff shout them out, the training of judges and the use of computers by administration staff.

Alternative ways to resolve disputes will also be introduced, which, it is hoped, will cut down drastically on the amount of time a hearing takes. "A new law will shortly be put before the People's Assembly for the creation of a civil prosecution system. Prosecutors will be trained to use mediation and case management, drawn from the American justice system but adjusted to the Egyptian system," said Abdel-Wahid. Before any civil court case appears before the judiciary, it will pass through the prosecutor, who will try to mediate between the two parties and their lawyers on the possibility of resolving the dispute out of court. *Should no reconciliation be reached*, the prosecution will verify all the required documentation and call the witnesses — a process at present sometimes assigned to the judge, and one of the main reasons why hearings and lawsuits drag on.

According to Fathi Naguib, counsellor to the minister of justice, "the prosecutor's early evaluation of the case is particularly important because some lawyers take advantage of their clients' legal illiteracy. They may tell them that their suit will be successful when they know they have a weak case, just so that they can extract fees. When the suit fails, they put the blame on the judge."

The prosecution system will at least shed light on the chances of each case at its outset.

But Mustafa Eweiss, a lawyer, is highly sceptical of the new prosecu*tion system. "The problem is simply* that I have doubts about whether the prosecution has the expertise and knowledge equal to that of judges which would enable them to make such early evaluations and arbitrate in legal matters." An increase in the number of judges in Egypt who could cope with the number of cases at hand would be preferable, he said.

One USAID official was more upbeat, although he was doubtful that the five-year period set for the project, which began in March last year and should end in December 2000, was enough to introduce revolutionary reforms to the judicial system. "It will *probably take longer than that because* we're really dealing with a cultural change," he said. The source was particularly concerned with the impact of the slow litigation procedures on potential foreign investment in the country. "It is acceptable in an Egyptian court to delay a court case for three to five years, but this is not acceptable to the business community and certainly not acceptable to multinational corporations," he asserted.

As part of the pilot projects, USAID is providing personal computers for 80 judges at their homes. The personal computers will be owned by the project until its termination, when ownership is to be transferred to the Ministry of Justice. But there is a question mark over the sustainability of such a costly project, especially after USAID withdraws and the Ministry becomes responsible for its nationwide implementation.



A show of muscle

In an airport, waiting for a delayed flight, I was approached by a middle-aged man, who did not show undue interest in my hand luggage and, therefore, seemed generally safe to talk to. I willingly answered his innocuous question about the new time of departure and told him that his guess was as good as mine, whereupon he considered the ice broken and settled down on the chair next to mine to wile away the hours in conversation or, more accurately, in delivering a monologue.

He was quick to confide that he was an obstetrician, divorced, with two children whom he was bringing up single-handed. He had divorced his wife, also an obstetrician, 15 years before, because she had accepted a three-month assignment at a hospital in Riyadh. Her mother would look af*ter the children*, she had told him then. He would have none of that, and was prompt to deliver an ultimatum. If she figured she could just up and go, even for a few months, then she had no use for her family. He had made sure she never saw the children again.

He himself had spent a year in Toronto teaching in a hospital. It was the first time he had left the children (a boy and a girl, now 22 and 19 respectively) with his sister. She had helped him all along and was completely devoted to him. She had chosen not to get married so that she could *stay with him after* his divorce. At one point she had tried to find him another bride, but none had met his conditions: he was only prepared to marry a woman who had no profession, no children of her own and who, furthermore, wanted none. But women were different today, they did not know how to make a man happy.

Interrupting the verbal flow, I managed to ask if his wife had remarried. She had not, he said briefly. "She still calls every week, to ask after the children, as if she cared! She begs me to let her see them," he added in an effeminate high pitch, wringing *his hands in what he imagined to* be a parody of his wife. "She is very successful professionally, that should be enough, she can't have everything!" he added, rather spitefully I thought.

I tried to change the drift of the conversation before I was driven to say or do something I might regret, and he was soon telling me of the hardships of his life, especially driving in downtown Cairo, which had become such an aggressive activity. I pointed out that it was bad for all of us, and commented that women were usually at a disadvantage, with male drivers often bullying us off the road. He smiled smugly and informed me that he had never allowed a woman to overtake him. In fact, he asserted, he personally took great pleasure in cutting in front of female drivers. It was fun, he said, to see them swerve to avoid him. He admitted he would not behave in the same way if a man was behind the wheel. "But what can a woman do to me? If she is not happy, she should stop driving. My mother did not drive. She had better things to do, like looking after us." Later he looked slightly surprised when I moved as tactfully as possible to the other side of the waiting room and pretended to fall fast asleep.

I was recently reminded of my charming travel companion, when I had the chance to observe a buxom middle-aged woman, bulging out of her designer business suit, her lips that particular hue of purple produced only by the brutal embrace of a girdle, her stiff, once-black hair now the tone of blond so euphemistically labelled *cendré* on the bottle, her plump, bejewelled hands impatiently teasing the horn of the type of car one immediately associates with quick money. She was working her way decisively against the traffic down a tight one-*way street, and eventually found herself* on a head-on collision course with a young lady who was only exercising her rights. The heavyweight, arrested in her progress and unable to push the obstacle out of the way, opened her window and hollered, "What is the matter with you, stupid, do you need driving lessons?" The young woman opened and shut her mouth several times, and, unable to come up with an appropriate retort, started to back up, rewarded by an obscene gesture from the bejewelled hand.

Who knows, though, maybe one day — soon, I hope — destiny will organise an encounter between the two bullies. I am only sorry that I will not be there to witness the exchange. Meanwhile, I am brushing up on my collection of grassroots abuse and practicing decisive verbal *coups de grâce* since, after meeting the above two specimens, I feel entitled to abandon the last vestiges of my reserve in communicating with fellow motorists.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Spinach with eggs & milk

Ingredients:
1 kg green spinach
1 onion (grated)
1 tbsp. crushed garlic
1 cup green dill leaves
1 cup green coriander
1 cup whole milk
4 eggs (beaten)
Breadcrumbs
Butter
Salt+pepper+allspice

Method:
Wash the spinach thoroughly and cut it into small pieces. Mix it with the dill and coriander. Melt the butter and gently stir them until the butter is totally absorbed. In another cooking pan, stir fry gently the onion only until goldened. Add the garlic and stir. Add the seasoning and the spinach, dill and coriander. Cover and leave over medium heat until the water residue is absorbed. Coat an oven dish with butter and sprinkle on some breadcrumbs. Pour the spinach. Mix the milk and eggs with a dash of black pepper and add to the spinach. Place in a preheated moderate oven until it is cooked. Turn upside down in a serving dish and serve hot with a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Fade to grey

Andrew Steel mixes his motifs

I like a large chest, and there's a very large chest indeed in the lobby of the Taj Mahal in Mohandessin. A Mogul relic no doubt, to conjure an atmosphere. But quite what the interior decorators were striving for in terms of *atmosphere when designing the space is not* immediately obvious. Fans of Len Deighton may think that they have ended up in Bret Renssacler's office. The grey, black and white motif could not be further removed from the heady aromas and bright, vibrant colours of the sub-continent. The pharaonic wanna-be prints that adorn the walls, the comfortable Aztec-inspired upholstery, the conspicuous hi-tech cleanliness: all make for a hotchpotch of styles and affectations to confuse the eye and trick the senses. And directly behind our table was another large chest.

The portals of the Taj Mahal are large and constructed of post-modern ironwork. One ascends a grey metal staircase that would not have looked out of place in a London night club of the new romantic era and reaches a spacious dining area of much mixed motif.

The waiters are garbed up in kurta pyjamas, Rajisthani hats on heads. Chatty, friendly and ready to please, this is a staff with a sense of humour. Rather like the interior designers, methinks.

And so to the vittals. A large plate of marinated onions and a dish of mint chutney arrived with the menus. Sour, spicy and bright red were the onions. Guaranteed to give you the sort of breath that precludes kissing for the rest of the evening. Tasty tidbits, though. A conspicuous lack of *poppadums* and *pakoras* was assuaged by a platter of *samosas*, ordered from the small but select à la carte menu. We decided, after a quick perusal, that the chef knew exactly what he was doing, and selected the two "ideal set menus" and a *thali*.

The vegetarian selections were, as is often *the case with the delights of the sub-continent*, the tastes of choice. Perfect *paneer masala* and delirious *daal* accompanied tandoori vegetables, *raita*, and basmati rice of the ideal set vegetarian menu. Chicken, fish and *reshmi* kebab substituted in the meaty version. The *thali* was a real one. Served on an authentic *thali* platter, the diversity of dishes was a boon, to be sure. Moist *lacha paranthas* stood in for knives and forks, a mound of sticky rice sat incongruously in the centre of the tray (not basmati: slapped wrists in the kitchen), and the whole was more than your usually gluttonous scribe could manage. Not for want of trying. The food at the Taj Mahal is top-notch northern Indian. A dining companion who should know vouched for its veracity.

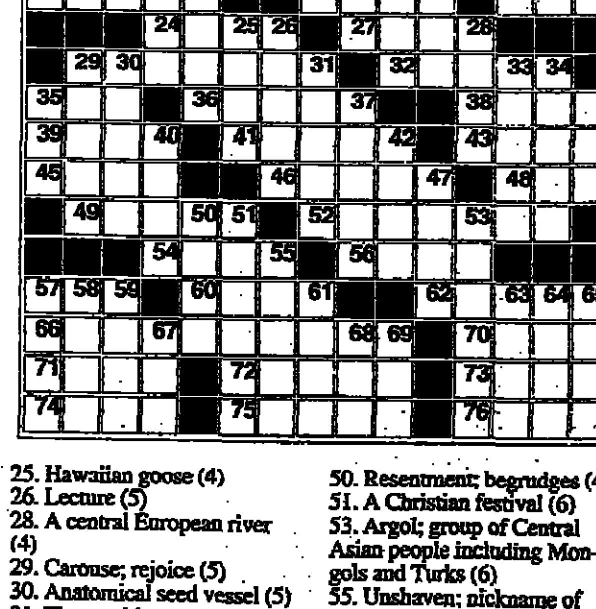
A trip to the lav revealed another stylistic misdemeanour: decidedly pagan corn dollies adorned the doors. I was half expecting a maypole to come burgeoning out of the kitchen. But alas, it was not to be. To sum up, one can cope with the disparity of styles at the Taj Mahal because somehow it works. On what level and why is not evident, but with a bill of LE 150 for three, with three Stellas, for a damn good stuffing one can hardly complain, much less display Agra-vation.

The Taj Mahal, 5 Lebanon Street, Mohandessin
Tel: 3025669

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour



ACROSS
1. Blade of screw; an inconstant person (4)
5. Give someone a licking (5)
10. Castle ditch (4)
14. Baker, broiler (4)
15. *Bandy words* (5)
16. Arm bone (4)
17. Mammila (4)
18. Contest of skills (10)
20. Fallacy (5)
22. The weather directions (4)
23. Hold in view (3)
24. Single transmission path (4)
27. Inspiring fear, var. (4)
29. Kleptomaniacs; housebreakers (7)
32. A disinfectant solution (5)
35. Accelerate (3)
36. Traitor; a reptile (5)
38. Vivacity (4)
40. Obovate (4)
42. Short musical exercise (5)
44. Tear apart violently (4)
45. Famous fiddler (4)
46. Clyster (5)
48. Animal doc. (3)
49. French state secondary school (5)
52. Wrinkled (forehead) (7)
54. Crest of a hill (4)
56. Covered colonnade (4)
57. A person who behaves dishonorably (3)
60. A contrivance; instrument (4)
71. Collection; accumulation (4)
72. Stole, jumbled (5)
73. Particle (4)
74. Foul-smelling (4)
75. Light biscuits used as food for babies (5)
76. Tups (4)

DOWN
1. Roll call; voice (4)
2. Guarantee (4)
3. Neighbouring (4)
4. Bury (6)
5. Posed (3)
6. For (3)
7. Chilliness; malarial fever (4)
8. Doctor's assistant (5)
9. Dog's hiding place (6)
10. Speechless (3)
11. Spanish cheers (4)
12. Name of many British queens (4)
13. Well known British art gallery (4)
19. Crookedly; oblique (4)
21. Fleeces (4)
25. Hawaiian goose (4)
26. Lecture (5)
28. A central European river (4)
29. Carouse; rejoice (5)
30. Anatomical seed vessel (5)
31. Thoroughly contemptible person; evil smelling animal (5)
33. Its branch denotes peace (5)
34. Bathed (5)
35. King Arthur's ebony spear (3)
37. Gardens of delight (5)
39. Seine (3)
41. Fasten; ringlet (4)
43. Spew; discharge (4)
47. Above (4)
50. Resentment; begrudges (4)
51. A Christian festival (6)
53. Argol; group of Central Asian people including Mongols and Turks (6)
55. Unshaven; nickname of French private soldier (5)
57. In US, head of a crime syndicate (4)
58. The indigo plant (4)
59. Spanish surrealist painter (4)
61. Percents, abb. (4)
63. Whit; particle (4)
64. Rack and ruin (4)
65. Stately trees (4)
67. Escorted (3)
68. Question; demand (3)
69. .... Angeles (3)

Last week's solution

Out of sight



Some of Cairo's slum areas are on their way to becoming up-market neighbourhoods as market mechanisms and local government policy act in congruence to remove "eyesores" from the mega-city's ever-expanding centre. **Fatemah Farag** investigates

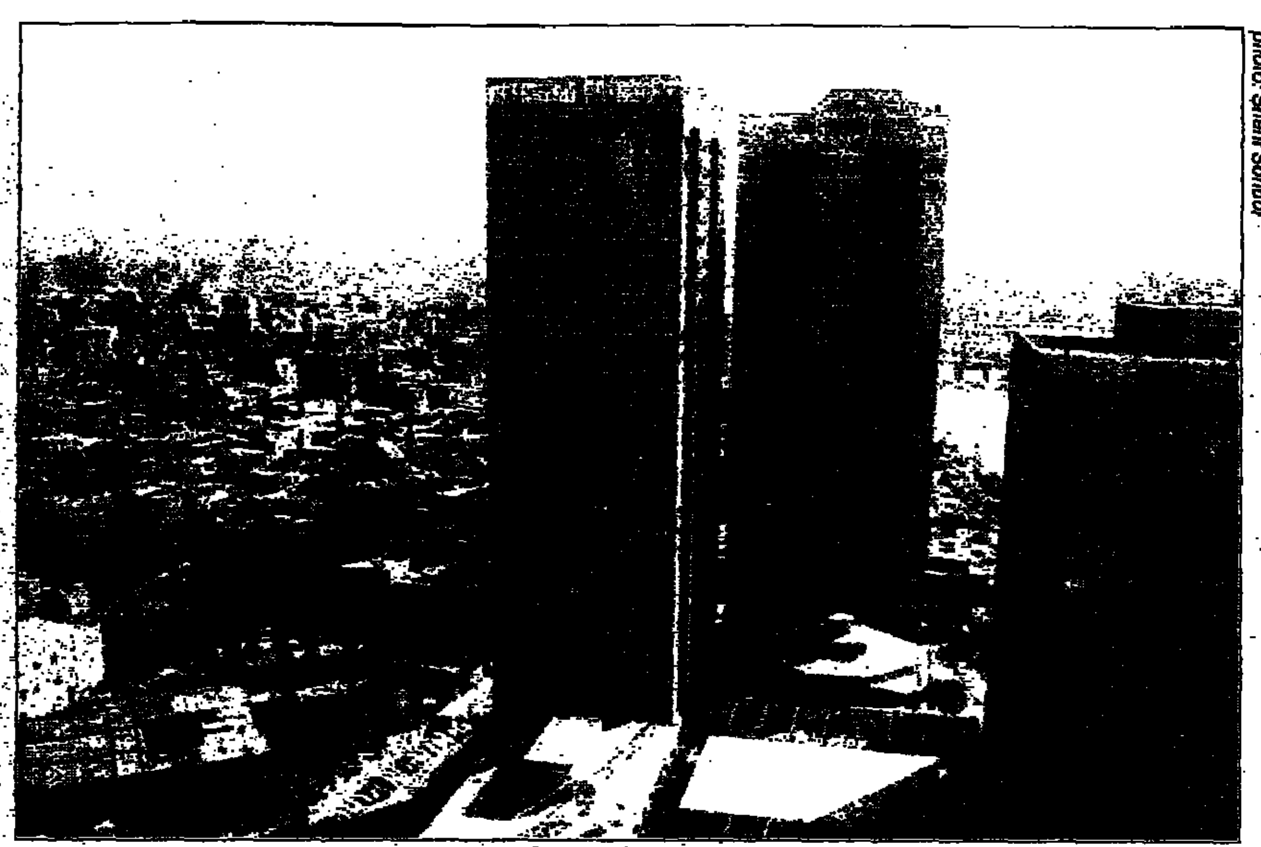


photo: Sherif Sonbol

The city of Cairo brings together the housing of rich and poor in one sprawling mass. A newcomer's eyes quickly become accustomed to seeing small, ramshackle houses tucked in the shadow of the palatial towers or hit upon small villages right in the midst of such upper middle class districts as Mohandessin and Dokki. However, with real estate prices rocketing sky-high in the metropolis, the past years have witnessed systematic attempts to move the "eyesores" to outlying areas and replace them with more "suitable", if not necessarily more esthetically pleasing, structures.

Sahat El-Torgoman in downtown Cairo used to be one such enclave of poverty. Abdel-Rehim Shehata, Cairo's governor, announced last month that investment offers for the 5,200 square metres of land — which was cleared of hundreds of inhabitants in 1982 — had reached over LE20,000 per metre, a fantastic one billion pounds for the whole site. Investors plan to build shopping malls, a small car park and some apartment buildings on the current, government-run car park. Other areas within the city such as El-Mawardi and Hikr Abu Doma will also be up for auction soon.

"When the governorate moved the inhabitants from here [Sahat El-Torgoman] to areas such as El-Zawya El-Hamra and Ain Shams [in north Cairo] we all suffered," said Ahmed Sayed who owns a shop opposite the fenced-in car park in Sahat El-Torgoman. "The people who were moved have great difficulties in commuting to work and the places they live in are no good. Shop owners like me suffered because we depended on these people for business."

In a city inhabited by more than 10 million people, many major neighbourhoods lack basic infrastructure. Shehata has vowed to deal with the problem of Cairo's internal slum areas by selling them off to private sector contractors to be re-developed for profit. The governor also announced recently that the proceeds of the auctioning off of these areas would be used for housing and infrastructure projects for low-income groups. Yet, many people living in slum areas are sceptical of government promises.

"We hear statements about upgrading our lives all the time in the papers, but we will believe it when it happens," said Saber Ibrahim, who works near the premises of the newspaper *Al-Akhbar*. "When they sold off land in Boulaq they built things which are 'touristic' and are of no use to us... Go onto our streets and you will see that we need many things... Our youth need libraries and activity centres. At least now, however, with these new plans we might get some jobs for our youth and shops are definitely better than this parking lot."

Residents of approximately 30 houses were recently evicted from Ali Bey Hosni, an area sandwiched between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Radio-TV Building, in preparation for an extension to be carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"I am really worried," said *Hagg* Ali who owns a small shop in front of the demolished area. "What if those in the television building decide to expand it tomorrow... what will I do?"

People in the neighbouring area admitted that the government had compensated evicted families with housing worth LE13,000 for one-room flats or LE15,000 for two-room flats. However, *Hagg* Ali, who had many friends among those who left, claimed the compensation was insufficient. "I agree that the buildings didn't look good but the people who lived there for over 50 years had a right to a better compensation," he said.

Said, a metal worker in Boulaq who was evicted from Ali Bey Hosni, said: "I am a poor man and I had never held a thousand pounds in my hands before... I was happy at first to have so much cash, but later I realised that the money was hardly enough to put a deposit on a flat that would cost LE100 a month to rent... I only make a little over LE100 as it is."

Other ex-residents complained that they were given no real choice. They claimed that people who refused to be evicted were forced to by the government. Abdel-Rahman, a mechanic who now has to commute for one hour and a half to Boulaq, said: "This is the way it is... We live in an area for decades and the government doesn't do much to make our life more bearable... and then when they decide they want the land we have to move to some other far away place and start all over again... It isn't fair."

Pyramid power for the sacred arrow

The turnip-shaped sacred arrow was let fly to "open a new door to the future". To the watching Sphinx, the ancient Japanese ritual must have seemed familiar. Not so for **Nevine El-Aref** who looked on in awe

Fourteen Japanese visitors and members of the Japanese Embassy assembled at Giza last week to witness Takahito Tomotsune, Grand Master of the Yamato Koryu School of Japanese Traditional Arts in Tokyo, performing an ancient ritual involving archery and the burning of incense at the foot of the Sphinx.

"To perpetuate an ancient tradition during the ninth anniversary of the new emperor [ascending] the throne, and to re-imbue the sacred arrow with Pyramid power, Tomotsune performed a unique ritual out of Japan for the first time," said Hisako Akashi, a housewife and friend of the Grand Master. She explained that by shooting the sacred turnip-shaped arrow from the holy area of the Pyramids and the Sphinx would "open a new door to the future," and she explained that because Tomotsune sees many cultural affinities between Japan and Egypt it was very important to carry out this ritual here.

"It is easy for Japanese people to relate to Egypt," Tomotsune said, explaining that the two countries share many traditions including archery and rituals where incense symbolises power. "It was surprising for me to see a relief of Ramses II carrying out an incense ritual," he said, because in both Ancient Egypt and Japan such gestures represented the power that linked god and humans.

"It is clear that the structure of the bow was not transmitted through my ancestors, but from Egypt," Tomotsune went on. "The bow and arrow we use in Japan are similar to those used in Egypt in ancient times. Both are made of bamboo, which was cultivated in Egypt. Through performing such a ritual, we have been linking our ancient cultures [and] I have created an opportunity to hear and feel the voice of the Ancient Egyptian god."

Tomotsune believes that the two cultures were linked by the ancient Silk Road, and he hopes to discover more roots of his own culture when visiting the ancient sites of Egypt.

Special arrangements had to be made for the archery ceremony at the Sphinx. The ground in front of its paws was covered with wooden blocks and 12 lamps "representing the 12 signs of the zodiac," were placed on both sides as well as a large wooden screen covered with a multi-coloured scarf.

"The screen represents the universe and each colour of the scarf one of the five elements: earth, fire, metal, water and sky," said Akashi.

The arrow used in the performance is specially crafted, and the only one left in Tomotsune's family, made by the last surviving master craftsman. It was first used nine years ago, on the occasion of the ascension of the new Japanese emperor to the throne which took place in the Kasama shrine, one of the biggest in Japan. Tomotsune wore a traditional *kamitshimo* of the *Samoray* in ancient times for the ceremony. He also carried a ceremonial sword that has been handed down for generations.

Mamdouh Ghazali, archaeological inspector at Giza who accompanied Tomotsune to the plateau the day before, said that Tomotsune and his assistant spent the whole of the previous night inside the Great Pyramid burning incense in Khufu's burial chamber.

The ceremony was attended by members of the Japanese Embassy, senior officials of the Egyptian Tourist Authority, the Ministry of Tourism, and the travel agency that sponsored the ceremony.



Yamato Koryu is the 21st direct lineal descendant of the founder of the Yamato Koryu School, which began traditional arts training 1,200 years ago. He and his family have been passing down traditional Japanese observances, customs and etiquette from generation to generation

Travellers in Egypt

'Father of Egyptology'

Flinders Petrie systematically excavated Egypt from north to south. **Lyla Pinch Brock** describes the impact this colourful and eccentric figure had on rewriting history

Sir William Flinders Petrie's career as an Egyptologist was determined at birth. Brought into the world by a mother who was nearly 50, "I was supposed stillborn, another nurse dropped me, and so punched in my skull." These early events, he suggested, endowed him with the toughness necessary to explore Egypt in the late 1800s. He was to suffer ill-health all his life (he was a chronic asthmatic) but it did not deter him from walking 27 miles to the bank to pay workmen when he was excavating at Lahun at the entrance to the Fayoum.

Petrie was an enigmatic and charismatic figure, blessed with energy, determination and ingenuity. Like Darwin and others, he was an agent of change. He was the first to use pottery to date sites, quickly adopted the newly-invented camera for excavation work, and saw the possibilities of the X-ray to examine mummies. Howard Carter, the discoverer of the Tomb of Tutankhamun, described him as "...obviously a man endowed with wits which gave him both confidence and the power to solve problems — in archaeological matters a Sherlock Holmes."

His early education was spotty. He had none until he was six and suffered a nervous breakdown at the age of eight as a result of being crammed with too many languages. "I was taught nothing after, till when I was grown up (when) I took an Oxford extension course in mathematics." His mother instilled in him an interest in minerals and coins, and by the time young Flinders was 13, he understood the value of stratigraphy. His love of mathematics (but not algebra) led him to tramp over the whole of England doing government survey work, staying at cheap lodgings. "All this," he said, "was the best training for a desert life afterwards."

The desert life began in 1880. His father, a civil engineer, inspired by the recent publication of *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramids* by Piazzi-Smith, "decided to take his son and make accurate measurements of the Great Pyramid. Petrie stayed until 1882.

Two years later he was offered his greatest opportunity by the Egypt Exploration Fund, an interest group led by Amelia Edwards, a popular writer and wealthy spinster. They approached Gaston Maspero, director of the Antiquities Service, to fund an excavation. "Send me a young Englishman," he said, "and I will train him." He already knew of Petrie, and offered to let him excavate, but made it clear that all finds, with a few exceptions, would go to the new museum (forerunner of the Egyptian Museum) in Boulaq.

Beginning in 1884, Petrie systematically worked his way from north to south of Egypt, excavating countless sites including Tanis, Heliopolis, Giza, Memphis, Hawara and Kahun in the Fayoum, Tel El-Amarna, Abydos and Dendera, in the process making more major archaeological discoveries than any other archaeologist.

Petrie is probably best known for his work at Kahun, where he excavated the village of the Pyramid workmen (and kept the mummies under his bed); Amarna, where he planned the royal residences and managed to preserve the painted plaster pavement now in Cairo Museum.

"From the mass of disordered evidence," wrote British archaeoldgist Walter Emery, "he established the order of succession of the kings of the First Dynasty so soundly that with small modification his reconstruction of the chronological position of each monarch still stands at the present..."

Margaret Drower, Petrie's biographer, says he thought of himself as a "salvage man," a rescuer of what would disappear in the hands of plunderers. He was a prolific recorder, and sent copies of what he called "his journal" to a number of treasured friends. Every year he published his work and held an exhibition in London to display the finds allowed him by Maspero. He not only wrote about sites, but also categories of objects: *Weights and Measures, Tools and Weapons, Egyptian Decorative Art, Historical Scarabs*, and general works on archaeology including *The Religion of Ancient Egypt, Methods and Aims in Archaeology*. Altogether he authored more than a thousand books, articles and reviews.

"Petrie," writes Drower, "realised what no other digger in Egypt had guessed: that much of the true history of Egyptian civilisation was to be read in the trifling things, the potsherds and the bricks, the beads and flints and small domestic objects whose broken fragments filled the debris of every settlement site and every cemetery."

When Petrie's mother died, he looked for a wife. His marriage to Hilda Urlin was a splendid match. She took to a life of excavation like a duck to water, illustrating his finds and inventing her own dig costume, consisting of a pair of bloomers and an overshirt.

Petrie's personality and appearance were impressive. "He was a handsome man," attests Drower, "twinkly eyes, bushy beard, bushy eyebrows." His ability to laugh at himself, which shines through his autobiographies, endeared him to his workmen. He was extremely fair, paid them the market value of every item found. He trained a number of men from Qift in excavation techniques, and these became the "Qifti", an inherited profession still sought after on excavations in Egypt.

Petrie had many disagreements with the Fund, and also museum officials, whom he accused of selling the things out the back door that he had brought in the front, but he financed some of his excavations by selling objects to private dealers or museums at home and abroad. The British Museum, the Liverpool Museum, the Ashmolean and the Petrie Museum in London, among others, contain his finds. In 1894 he abandoned the Fund and set up his own, the Egyptian Research Account, which later became the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. In 1892 he was appointed to the first chair in Egyptology, Edward Professor at University College London, which he held until 1933. His *Seventy Years in Archaeology* was published in 1931.

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.
Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.
Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am. Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410.

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians. LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.
Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians. LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians. LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians. LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:
http://www.idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:
http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.
Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.
http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has It All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.
http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.
http://www-ceg.ceg.vivc.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.
http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.
http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.
http://intercoz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.
http://www.datum.com.eg/~city is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CDs besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayan.
http://watt.seas.virginia.edu/~aoa5v is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**

Full black

This week Iran fought back from two goals down to snatch a 2-2 draw against Australia, thus becoming the last of the 32 nations to qualify for the 1998 World Cup. In the first of a new weekly series profiling the teams who will be competing in France. Inas Mazhar reports from the continent of Africa


South Africa preparing for the World Cup with the hosts, France

For the first time in a history that began in 1930 in Uruguay, next year's World Cup will see the participation of 32 nations in the month-long tournament. Only 24 countries took part in the last edition in 1994 in the USA. In 1998, the teams will be divided into eight groups of four, with the first two from each advancing to the second round.

The tournament will kick off on June 10 at the newly-constructed Stade de France in Paris, and the final will be played on July 12, at the same venue. The 64 matches in between will be played in 10 different venues around the country: as well as the Stade de France, there will be matches in Montpellier, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lens, Marseilles, Lyon, Nantes, Saint Etienne and at a second Paris venue, the Parc des Princes.

Of the 32 nations who have qualified after two long years of preliminary matches across all five continents, five are from Africa, four from Asia, three from the Concacaf (Central American-Caribbean) countries, five from South America, and 15 from Europe.

In this first article in this new series, we will be looking at Egypt's own continent — Africa.

For the first time, five nations will be representing Africa in the world's most prestigious football tournament. Hitherto only two nations would represent the continent in the World Cup. However, at a meeting in the USA in 1994, FIFA, the world soccer governing body, decided to give Africa another place in that event.

Later in the same year, during the FIFA elections, two places were taken from Europe and given to the African continent, in recognition of the progress it had shown in the sport during the 1994 event. So for the first time, Africa will have five nations participating in the World Cup — as many as South America and more than Asia, though still less than Europe.

The African qualifying rounds started in March '95. Of the 36 participating teams, four were exempted from the first round: Cameroon, Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt. In the second round, 20 teams then were divided into five groups of four. The five group winners qualified for the World Cup. They were Cameroon, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia.

Cameroon: The indomitable lions are playing their fourth World Cup. The only African team to have reached the quarter-finals (1990), Cameroon failed to win a single match in America in 1994. They managed to beat Zimbabwe and Angola in a qualifying group that also included Togo. The coach's job is currently shared between four Cameroonians, and a new (foreign) coach is likely to be named soon. Top players are goalkeeper Jacques Songo'o, who plays in Spain for Deportivo le Corona, defender Pierre Womw and forwards Patrick Mboma and Salomon Olembe.

Morocco: Coached by former French national trainer Henri Michel, Morocco has become the first African nation to qualify four times for the World Cup, and did so with a game to spare after four wins and a draw. The Moroccans also qualified in '70, '86, and '94. They reached the second round in Mexico by coming top of their group before losing to the eventual winners, West Germany.

Nigeria: Known as the "Super Eagles", Nigeria is playing in their second World Cup, after reaching the second round in 1994, where they lost to eventual finalist Italy after leading with only two minutes to go. The Eagles have recently won the gold medal at the 1996 Olympics, an under-23 tournament, after beating a powerful Brazilian side in the semifinal and Argentina in the finals. One of the first nations to reach the final, Nigeria dominated its group, which included Kenya, Guinea and Burkina Faso. The position of team coach is currently vacant, but top players include Barcelona's Emmanuel Amunikje, currently recovering from knee surgery, and Inter Milan forward Nwankwo Kanu, who is returning to the game after heart surgery.

South Africa: The "Bafana Bafana" (Boys Boys) are playing in their first World Cup. They returned to international soccer in 1992 after a two-decade ban because of the apartheid regime, and went on to win the African Nations Cup at home in 1996. They defeated the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) in a showdown match at home to win the qualifying group — a group that included Zambia and the former Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo. Clive Barker is the coach and top players include midfielder Doctor Khumalo, defender Mark Fish, and striker Phil Nasinga.

Tunisia: Tunisia is playing in its second World Cup, having failed to get past the first round in 1978. They are a strong team, and finished runner-up to South Africa in the 1996 African Nations Cup. They won a particularly hard-fought qualifying group that included Egypt, Namibia and Liberia. Top players are goalkeeper Chokri el Ouaer and forward Zoubeir Beya.

Out of our box

Egypt is fielding three teams in its attempt to carry off the 5th Egyptian International Boxing Championship title, making it four wins out of five. Abeer Anwar pulls off the gloves and gets down to business

The Indoor Hall of the Olympic Centre at Maadi is the venue for both the 5th Egyptian International Boxing Championship (EIBC) and the 17th Arab Boxing Cup which are running concurrently from 2-7 December. Besides Egypt, 12 countries will be taking part. They are: Sudan, Algeria, Palestine, Tunisia, Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, China, Uganda and Romania. The EIBC is being held under the auspices of the Supreme Council of Youth and Sports, and with the active support of Dr Abdel-Moneim Emara, the Council's executive manager. It is included in the agenda of the International Amateur Boxing Federation (IABF) as an official event, and is supervised by Dr Ismail Hamed, member of the IABF and head of the Egyptian and Arab Amateur Boxing Federations (EABF).

All the teams are staying in the Olympic Centre to facilitate the logistics of the event, as boxers have to be weighed in the morning and fight in the afternoon. Each of the guest countries is allowed to enter a maximum of 6 boxers and provide one referee.

Egypt, as host nation, will be entering three teams. The "A-Team" comprises: Mohamed Abdel-Rahman (47kg), Eid Fekry (51kg), Ibrahim Farouk (54kg), Mohamed Abdel-Moneim (57kg), Saleh Abdel-Bari (60kg), Mohamed Mamdouh (63.5kg), Khaled Adel Hamed (67kg), Mohamed Heikal (71kg), Mustafa Farouk (75kg), Nasr Mohamed (81kg), Amr Mustafa (91kg) and Ahmed Abdel-Samad (+ 91kg). Heikal is a prodigy and a great asset: he took fifth place in the last World Championship in Hungary, although he is only 18 years old. Mustafa is also a force to be reckoned with, having been placed fifth in the 1995 Berlin World Championship. Team A is trained by Dr Abdel-Aziz Ghoneim, who has had to bring in many new players to fill the gaps left by the boxers who are travelling with the military boxing team to participate in the Military Boxing Championship being held in the USA next week. "I have tried out the new faces in a number of friendly matches, and they have proved themselves. I hope they will be able to collect as many medals as they can, so that we can win the title for the fourth time, especially since at this year's event there'll be some really strong competition. Some countries are bringing their best players, who are top-class world boxers — countries such as Ukraine and Algeria.

Team B consists of Soliman Mohamed (48kg), Essam Mustafa (51kg), Mohamed Zayed (54kg), Nader Refaee (57kg), Abdel-Nabi Lotfi (60kg), Fayez Sedik (63.5kg), Fadel Shaaban (67kg), Hesham Abdel-Rahman (71kg), Mohamed El-Harouni (75kg), Ahmed Salem (81kg), Mohamed Reda (91kg) and Mahmoud Fawzy (+ 91kg). Abdel-Hamid Othman is their trainer.

Egypt's third team (C) is a juniors team. They will be taking part to prepare for the World Championship in Argentina in November '98. "I am going to judge the players and their standard on the basis of this championship, as we do not have enough money to hold friendly matches with European countries. Those who impress me will stay with the team, the rest will have to go home." commented Dr Diaeddin Mohamed, the juniors' head coach. In addition, Dr Ismail Hamed, head of the EABF, will decide whether the team should go to Argentina or not according to their performance in this event. "If they are below standard, we will save the federation's budget and use it to help the senior team prepare properly," said Hamed. The juniors team consists of Metwalli Ahmed (48kg), Masoud Ahmed (51kg), Ragab Ragab (54kg), Sayed Abdel-Halim (57kg), El-Sayed Khamis (60kg), and Ramadan El-Mansi (63.5kg).

The national team prepared for this week's fights by holding a joint one-week training camp in Cairo with the Ukranians. The Ukranian team is made up of three world-ranked players: Faliri Sedari, the world military champion, Oleg Ki Rogan, the Atlanta champion and Ozlukouf Fisilli, the European champion.

The opening ceremony included the competition oath, which was said by Amr Mustafa, the most experienced boxer in the championship. There was also a women's display match, for the first time in the history of the EIBC. The women fought three matches of three rounds, each lasting two minutes. Though they were not taking part in the event itself, they will form the nucleus of a new women's boxing team which will be the first of its kind in either Africa or the Arab world. They were selected through the first "Challenge Championship" for women boxers, which was held last month.

A number of cups are up to be won during this week's championship — the Ganzouri Cup for the overall individual winner, the Abdel-Moneim Emara Cup for Sporting Spirit, the Prince Faisal bin Fahd Cup for Fair Play (team) and the El-Tayeb El-Hewashi Cup for the fair player (individual).

During the championship, a new computer that can be used for judging boxing matches, invented by Amr Sheteba, will also be demonstrated for the first time. The semi-finals and finals of both the EIBC and the 17th Arab Boxing Cup will be held on Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th of December at the Olympic Centre.

Four in one

In the ninth week of the National League, Ismaili pulled off a surprise advance up the league table to close on Ahli, while Zamalek demonstrated that despite recent disappointments, there's fire left in their bellies yet. Eman Abdel-Moeti warms her hands

It seems that Ismaili is the dark horse of the premiere league this season. They beat Masri 5-0 to claim their supremacy among the Canal zone clubs. The team are undefeated after nine matches, having won five, and tied four, earning themselves a well-deserved 19 points in the process. Their star player Salah Abu Greisha turned the tables on Masri, who had controlled the first half of the match, when he was brought on after half time. He restored his team's self-esteem and made three excellent passes from which Magdi El-Sayad scored three goals. Abu Greisha then took another himself, and Medhat Brakat a fifth.

Ismaili are now three points behind Ahli, who have reached the top by the skin of their teeth after a mysterious misunderstanding with their coach Reiner Holman. The German coach suddenly decided to quit the night of Ahli's match against Etihad Sakandary and shortly before their crucial encounter with arch rival Zamalek. Holman packed and left for Germany while Ahmed Maher took his place to lead the team to a great victory 3-0 against Sakandary.

Moqaweloon who are currently standing third in the table, suffered an upset when they were beated 2-1 by Suez. As Suez fans celebrated the victory, the Moqaweloon players literally cried their hearts out. But their coach Joseph Berger did not sympathise with them, saying they had not followed his instructions and thus should not be crying over spilt milk. However, the team's management have refused to cut their incentives as punishment for the loss.

Zamalek fans are pretty upset that the country's greatest football power-house after Ahli are still lingering in fourth place. But since it is only the ninth week of the league, they still hope their team may do better in the near future. Actually Zamalek fans have a good excuse, since their team recently managed to reach the finals of the Afro-Asian Football Tournament, where they will meet a Korean team next week to determine the ultimate winner. Zamalek also treated their fans to a spectacular 4-0 win over Shams this week, scoring all of the four goals in the last minute of the match and few minutes of injury time that followed. No one who was present could believe their eyes.

Finally Minya, who though they may be standing second to last in the league, still have reasons to be rejoicing after their first victory in the league this season, when they beat Ghazl El-Mahalla currently lying tenth 1-0.

Free kick against Kirch

FOOTBALL'S world governing body FIFA is against pay TV station coverage of the 2002 and 2006 World Cups and is taking steps to ensure free-to-air television coverage.

FIFA's General-Secretary Sepp Blatter said FIFA wanted to guarantee free transmission of World Cup matches on terrestrial channels.

This proposal goes against the plans of German TV magnate Leo Kirch, who announced last month he would be negotiating for television rights after the 1998 finals. His plans were for most matches — apart from the opening match, the semi-finals and finals — to be televised on pay channels.

Spinning to the top

DEFENDING champion American figure skating pair Jenni Meno and Todd Sand captured the short programme at the NHK Trophy in Nagano, Japan, with hopes that their repeated luck would also earn them the Olympic gold. The pair spun side-by-side in methodical syncopation to the classical theme "Pomp and circumstance," wrapping up with a smooth death spiral after an upside-down lift. The pair received thunderous applause when Meno's head almost touched the ice.

In the women's event of the NHK Trophy, Maria Butyrskaia from Russia came in first place (factored placing). In the men's event, Ilia Kulik, also from Russia came first. In Ice Dance, after the compulsory and original dance, Pasha Grishuk and Evgeny Platov of Russia were in first position.

Khan goes to Bombay

CANADA'S Jonathon Power became the first North American player ever to win a Super Series squash tournament, defeating Scotland's Peter Nicol 17-16, 15-13, 14-17, 9-15, 15-8 in the final of the Qatar International Championship. Power, 23, of Toronto, confirmed his breakthrough of the semi-finals, when he beat Pakistan's world no. 1 and top seed Jansher Khan for the first time.

Khan's bitter defeat — which came after he refused to defend his world title this month in Malaysia for the first time ever — has led him to brush off fears over his security and go ahead with plans to make his Indian debut this week. Jansher is also keen to get a look at Bombay, which is due to host next year's World Men's Squash Championships.

The Pakistani, whose country has uneasy ties with India, has signed up for the Bombay $110,000-prize-list competition in recent years, but has always withdrawn before the event, arguing that the organisers had failed to offer him adequate security.

Bobbing and weaving

FINLAND and Norway signed a letter of intent last week to jointly bid as hosts for the 2006 Winter Olympics. "We've had excellent cooperation," said Tapani Ilkka, president of Finland's National Olympic Committee. "We strongly believe in our joint project and its possibilities."

Between the two traditionally strong winter sport countries, almost all the facilities needed already exist. The Finnish capital deeply wants the games and has a reputation for excellent organising skills, but it doesn't have the slopes for skiing or a bobsled track. Lillehammer, Norway, which in 1994 held one of the most successful Winter Games in Olympic history, is in a position to supply both.

Meanwhile, Turkey, determined to push forward with its 2008 Olympic bid, started work last week on an 80,000-seater Olympic stadium. The stadium in Ikitelli, on the outskirts of Istanbul, is expected to be constructed in three years by France's Sae International and Campenon Bernard SGE firms in consortium with Turkey's Tekfen. Its cost is estimated at $90 million.

You know how

SPANISH first and second division football referees are to lay down their whistles and stage a strike this weekend in an unusual protest over what they claim is the barrage of insults against them from clubs, players and coaches. The Spanish Football Federation said that all first and second division matches would nonetheless go ahead as scheduled, with third division referees, for the most part young and inexperienced, being assigned to arbitrate.

The strike action is likely to cause controversy as it comes on a weekend when Real Madrid and arch-rival FC Barcelona play matches considered crucial to both teams' struggle to clinch the league leadership.

Five and you're out

ITALY'S Michele Piccirillo is the new European Boxing Union welterweight champion after beating British hope Geoff McCreesh by a technical knock-out. The bout for the vacant title had been evenly balanced until the ninth round when Piccirillo threw a powerful right hook and McCreesh sank to the ground. The British fighter got up after five seconds of the count but the Belgian referee had already seen enough and stopped the fight.

(AP, AFP)

Al-Ahram Weekly · 4 - 10 December 1997

photo: Randa Shaath



Hamza Alaaeddin:

Still waters run deeper than you think

The nomad's home

The first Nubian singer to have left the homeland, *Hamza Alaaeddin discusses racism in the* United States in a matter-of-fact way, a faint smile on his face. He speaks calmly, in soft tones. "I was shopping in a supermarket in Texas once. A woman came up to me, stared me in the eye, and said: 'Soon you'll have to get permits to breathe, you know.' Of course I knew that she was referring to the fact that I am black, but I quickly pulled a handkerchief from my pocket and covered my nose with it. 'Why, is the pollution so bad around here?' I asked her. She burst out laughing." This incident is typical of his way of life in many respects. "My grandfather once told me, *'If someone throws a stone at you, there* is no need to stand up straight and wait until it hits you. All you have to do is duck. Then you can forget about the stone.' I have never forgotten his words."

Hamza El-Din, as he is called for brevity's sake, takes life in his stride, accepting others as they come. Recordings of his music are unavailable in his own country: they can be found more easily in Tokyo or Paris, but this does not seem to disturb him unduly. He has no wish to change the world or brandish great principles with complicated names. A few principles he takes as facts, explaining them simply: Avicenna's discovery that the colour blue, like the north, or a certain frequency — these will make one calm. Certain scales are for night, others for morning.

He is first and foremost a tolerant man. He has another story to illustrate this point. "A hooligan is walking the streets of a large city late at night. He meets a well-dressed gentleman and asks him for a cigarette. The man tells him that he does not smoke. 'Oh,' says the hoodlum, 'you're one of these health freaks'. He then pulls out a gun and shoots him point-blank." Hamza minds his own business and forges ahead, stating his position clearly, expecting to be acknowledged and heard. "It is all a question of attitude," he also says. "One usually gets the treatment one attracts with one's behaviour. If I act as if I expect evil, chances are that this is what I will find." He is extremely relaxed, observing and taking in his surroundings without undue anxiety as to the image he projects. Alaaeddin is almost yogic in his certainty that one's behaviour determines one's fate. *It is this belief which has allowed him the* space to consider every situation with an open mind. His acceptance, and the music which *arouses an almost religious awe among his listeners*, have taken him all over the world. His first stop was Italy, where he spent five years, studying music and composition in Rome, on a scholarship which he received after graduating from the Faculty of Engineering of Cairo University in 1957.

He had planned to return from Italy to participate in the migration of the Nubians displaced by the construction of the High Dam, although his own family moved much earlier, when the Aswan Dam was raised for the second time, in the '40s. He was six years old when he left his home in Toshki. *On his way to Nubia, he stopped* to listen to an American friend who talked him into going to the United States instead, to cut his first record. "While waiting for all the formalities which surround the launching of such an event, I appeared in concert in Philadelphia." The record and the concert brought him to the attention of those interested in folklore. One panse led to another, and it was with a measure of self-assurance that he indignantly objected to the fact that no Third World musicians were playing at the concerts held during a human rights conference, organised by the United Nations in New York that year, 1962. "Human rights are also the concern of Third World countries," he told the organisers; "in fact, you are talking about us." He was told, however, that only classical music was deemed suitable for the venue.

Alaaeddin expressed surprise at what he considered a falsely elitist choice. "If classical music is old, and therefore respectable," he told the organisers, "Nubian music is much older. If you consider classical music to be genteel, do you *think I would have wasted five years of my life* studying our music, if it were not every bit as complex and refined as classical music?" Having *thus convinced them, he was invited to sing* during the event. The worldwide distribution of the recording which resulted propelled his career forward, while bringing Nubian music to the attention of international music professionals.

By then he had missed out on the exodus and, when he came back to Cairo, after eight years of absence, it was to visit friends and relatives in their new homes.

"Sometimes one sets out to achieve something and there are as many stumbling blocks as there are steps. At others, the going is so smooth that one has to believe it was meant to be." *In the same way, Hamza believes, one* does not choose one's house: the home chooses you. He went to Japan on a tour planned to last two weeks. He ended up staying 15 years, teaching Nubian music at a university in Tokyo. His wife, who is Japanese, was one of his students: she plays the viola. When they decided to get married, he took her to meet his family. "If you like them, then we can go ahead," he told her. She liked them, but, more importantly perhaps, they liked her. "When my family realised that she was a Muslim and spoke Nubian, they welcomed her with open arms." Of their child, Hamza says only, "he came into our lives, stayed a while and didn't like it much, so he soon left."

How did his wife learn Nubian? "All my students have to speak Nubian if they want to understand the music," says Alaaeddin simply, as if it were the easiest thing for Japanese and Americans to learn a foreign language in a few semesters. He is fluent in Italian, Japanese and English. Of course, he points out, all Nubians are *bilingual, as they have to learn Nubian and Arabic* at the same time. "It makes it easier to tackle other languages, when you already know two from childhood."

When he went to Italy, back in 1957, part of his scholarship had included six months of language studies. "There were many foreigners in the class and the teacher spoke to the Europeans in their respective languages. With me, she had a problem. So she addressed me in Italian from the word go. This is the reason why I was top of the class at the end of the semester, while none of the others managed to master Italian." In the States, at one of the universities where he taught, students of Middle Eastern studies were having difficulties learning Arabic. He gave *them a tape recording of Umm Kalthum's Al-Atlal* and told them to listen to it daily. They did so several times a day for three months. Meanwhile, he worked with them on the words. Soon they were able to master a working knowledge of the language.

These days, Alaaeddin is teaching at Berkeley. He was invited by the Ministry of Culture to attend the opening of the Nubia Museum. He found it impressive and well-designed. "All over the world right now, there are exhibitions of Nubian artifacts. Here, we only have a fraction of the treasures that the excavations yielded at the time of the construction of the dam. Our burial grounds remained undisturbed until the successive population movements, as opposed to other parts of Egypt. It is only then that the most precious objects were discovered, secretly removed and finally smuggled out of the country." But Alaaeddin is not bitter about the loss. He travels a great deal and has had the chance to see all the Nubian objects on display in the most important museums in Europe and the *United States. He is and will remain a Nubian* first and foremost, but now he regards the world as his homeland. His favourite country? "Wherever I am right now." He used to think that the grass was always greener elsewhere, but not anymore. He has matured and learned to love what he has. Egypt, however, will remain the place where his heart lives. "It is the Nile. In the olden days, all Nubian houses were turned towards the Nile. You opened your front door, and there was the river. Now the Nubians have the desert at their doorsteps. This is why they are not happy. But I was born close to the Nile and it has marked me forever. I will always return." Alaaeddin keeps a flat in Maadi, but Aswan is his pole of attraction. "In Cairo they have taken over the river with their casinos, clubs and large boats. In Aswan, in certain areas, the water still flows majestically." He has seen other rivers in other countries; there are many rivers in the world, "but their flow is turbulent, nervous, disturbed. None flows as smoothly as our Nile up south." Whenever he feels nostalgic for a glass of Nile water, he is back. "And I am very often thirsty."

Profile by **Fayza Hassan**

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♣ I wish you could see *Al-Ahram*'s news room these days. It has been completely redecorated and equipped with state-of-the-art high-tech computers. It is specially designed to promote extra speed and efficiency in the dissemination of the news. Soon our readers will be able to read about important events as they happen or before.

Chairman of Al-Ahram Organisation and Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Ahram* **Ibrahim Nafie** presided over the very first meeting of the central desk in the revamped, journalistically- and environmentally-friendly newsroom. All those attending the meeting felt that *Al-Ahram* was being launched, at that very instant, into the 21st century. A small price to pay: the No Smoking sign will be scrupulously enforced.

♥ One of my more *multitalented friends is* **George Bahgory**, the well-known painter and caricaturist, whose thumbnail sketches of world leaders grace the pages of every issue of the *Weekly*. Well, George has now turned his talents to writing, producing the incisive, and often poignantly hilarious, *Faltas's Icon*. And just who is the mysterious Faltas? You will have to read the book yourselves to find out, my dears. Curiosity did the cat no good, remember. As a hint, however, the cover of George's semi-autobiographical book is graced with a charming family portrait. A second glance, however, will reveal that the heads of little George, his siblings and his parents are adorned with lovely halos, in a most fashionable tone of distressed gold. Such an original accessory idea! Just the thing for all those Christmas parties...



Top: Nafie and senior journalists at Al-Ahram central desk; bottom left: Amin Hewedy's *Perestroika and the Gulf War*; bottom right: Bahgory's *Faltas' Icon*

♦ More literary productivity from another quarter, but this time only, the true intellectuals among you should apply. Former minister of defence and head of the intelligence service **Amin Hewedy**'s *Perestroika and the First Gulf War* makes for fascinating reading, believe me. Hewedy never ceases to amaze me, as well as his other devoted readers, shocking us with stunning revelations. The suspense nearly brought on tachycardia, and I put down the book just in time. Not, however, before I had turned the last, gasp-inducing page.

♠ Hear ye, hear ye! The American University in Cairo Press will announce the winner of the 1997 Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature during this year's celebrations in honour of 86-year-old Nobel laureate **Naguib Mahfouz** at AUC's Oriental Hall on 11 December 1997. If you are lucky enough to be invited to the event, you will have the opportunity to peruse the 300 translations of works by **Naguib Mahfouz** and other Arab writers, including **Tawfiq El-Hakim, Taha Hussein, Youssef Idris, Fathi Ghanem, Ghassan El-Kanafani** and many, many others of our very favourite writers, dears. As a special feature, AUC Press will launch the English translation of *The Other Place*, by the 1996 winner of the Mahfouz Medal, **Ibrahim Abdel-Meguid**. As you must know by now, the award consists of a *silver* medal and *$1000* cash prize. This year the panel of judges includes **Ali El-Rai, Abdel-Moneim Tallima, Hoda Wasfi, Ferial Ghazoul** and **Mark Linz**, director of the American University in Cairo Press. I can't wait to hear the name of the lucky winner! I, dears, have not joined the competition, out of consideration for the more *budding talents lurking* out there in the literary wilderness.